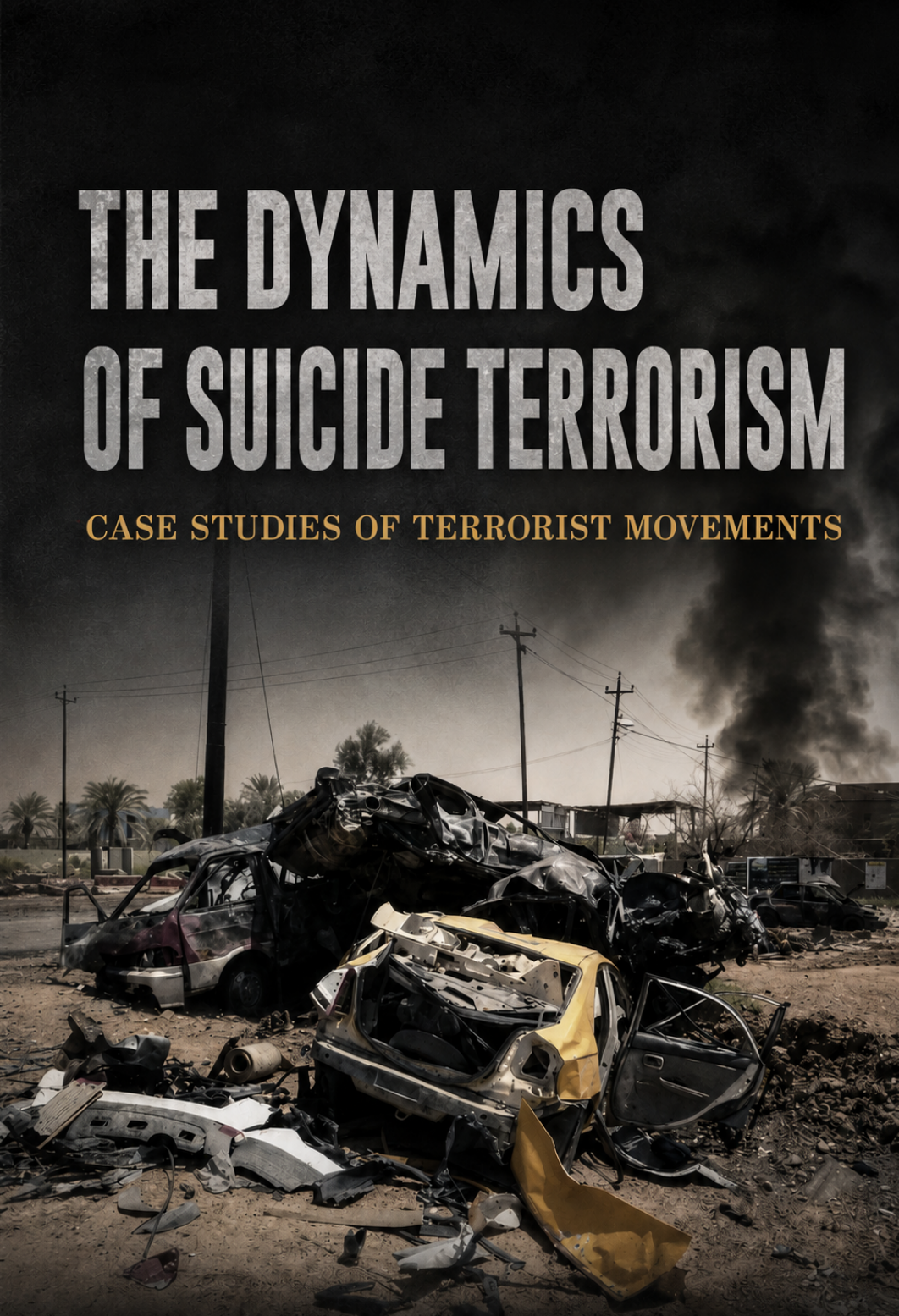
THE DYNAMICS OF SUICIDE TERRORISM

CASE STUDIES OF TERRORIST MOVEMENTS



PETER CHALK AND BRUCE HOFFMAN

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The Dynamics of Suicide Terrorism

Four Case Studies of Terrorist Movements

Peter Chalk, Bruce Hoffman

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Preface

The research presented here examines the phenomenon of suicide terrorism. The monograph focuses on four key case studies—the Lebanese Shi'a group, Hezbollah; the Palestinian organization Hamas, which has employed this tactic in its struggle against Israel; the ethnonationalist separatist movement active in Sri Lanka, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, also known as the "Tamil Tigers"; and al-Qaeda. The objective is to increase understanding of the growing popularity of this tactic; the organizational, societal, and individual motivations behind its use; the targets and attack patterns each movement uses; and decisionmaking processes and mindset that account for this phenomenon.

A companion study, *Preparing for Suicide Terrorism: A Primer for American Law Enforcement Agencies and Officers* (TR-204-FFF) by Bruce Hoffman et al., was published in October 2004. Its intention was to provide American law enforcement with a short, accessible, and practical primer suitable for training and preparation specifically in response to potential future incidents of suicide terrorism in the United States.

This monograph, which presents a detailed analysis of the four terrorism movements that are among the foremost exponents and practitioners of suicide terrorism, results from the RAND Corporation's continuing program of self-initiated independent research. Support for such research is provided, in part, by donors and by the independent research and development provisions of

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RAND's contracts for the operation of its U.S. Department of Defense federally funded research and development centers. This volume should be of interest to defense and foreign-policy decisionmakers, practitioners, analysts, and others concerned with countering suicide terrorism.

This research, which was conducted within the RAND Center for Middle East Public Policy, as well as the International Security and Defense Policy Center at RAND, was overseen by the RAND National Security Research Division (NSRD). NSRD conducts research and analysis for the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the unified commands, the defense agencies, the Department of the Navy, the U.S. Intelligence Community, allied foreign governments, and foundations.

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Dedication

In memory of U.S. Army Captain Ralph John "Jay" Harting III, killed in action by a suicide bomber near Diyarah, Iraq, on April 29, 2005.

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Summary

The spread of suicide terrorism worldwide suggests that the United States will not remain immune from this threat. Trends in terrorism already point to suicide terrorism's rising worldwide popularity. In the 1970s, for instance, this threat hardly existed. Even following its reemergence as a terrorist tactic in the 1980s, suicide attacks remained relatively infrequent, averaging only 2.5 per year throughout the 1990s. However, starting in 2001, the number increased to 41 per year, then to 45 in 2002, and 57 in 2003. Indeed, according to the RAND Terrorism Incident Database, some 70 percent of the suicide bombings recorded since 1968 have occurred in the past three years alone. Moreover, these attacks have spread geographically. During the 1980s, for example, suicide terrorism affected only four countries—Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Sri Lanka. Since the beginning of the 1990s, suicide attacks have, however, occurred in some 23 countries around the globe—including Israel, Russia, Sri Lanka, Lebanon, Turkey, Italy, Indonesia, Pakistan, Colombia, Argentina, Kenya, Tanzania, Croatia, Morocco, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Iraq. And as we know from the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the United States is no more able to stop all suicide bombers than any other targeted country.

This report seeks to shed light on the phenomenon of suicide terrorism through an examination of four, equally formidable, terrorist movements that have long been among this tactic's foremost exponents: the Lebanese Shi'a group, Hezbollah, which pioneered the

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use of suicide terrorism during the 1980s and 1990s; the various Palestinian Sunni religious and secular organizations (the Palestinian organization, Hamas) that have repeatedly employed this tactic in their struggle against Israel; the ethnic Tamil separatist organization known formally as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam or informally as the "Tamil Tigers"; and al-Qaeda, the Sunni radical jihadist movement and transnational terrorist organization founded and led by Osama bin Laden. Through these four case studies, we seek to illuminate both the similarities and differences among the organizational imperatives of these four movements that have respectively influenced their resort to this tactic, the motivations of the individual perpetrators within these movements who willingly execute suicide attacks, and the targeting and tactics of each of these movements and the decisionmaking processes and mindset behind their selection.[1]

The decision to resort to suicide strikes, far from being an irrational act of desperation, is deliberately calculated and is predicated on a reasoned cost-benefit analysis: Such attacks are cheaper, involve potentially higher levels of destruction, are less complex, and are generally more effective than other manifestations of "conventional" terrorism. In short, suicide terrorist tactics are adopted because they work and are instrumental in meeting the requirement of large-scale coercive punishment that has become so integral to the contemporary manifestation of extremist political violence. More specifically, they help to balance the military equation and, thereby, help offset the extant power asymmetries that are generally seen to characterize the relationship between state and nonstate actors.

The key to understanding suicide terrorism is not attempting to profile individual bombers but examining the strategic, practical, and

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[1] This report does not consider the threat that so-called "lone wolves" pose in the United States: individuals who may engage in acts of suicide terrorism but who neither belong to, nor operate at the behest of, nor follow the orders of an established terrorist organization or other conspiratorially oriented collection of individuals. An example of a lone wolf threat occurred in July 2002, when Hashem Hadayat, a naturalized U.S. citizen born in Egypt, staged an armed attack at Israeli airline El Al's ticket counter in the Tom Bradley International Terminal at Los Angeles International Airport.

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ideological experiences of groups that have employed this mode of violence as an integral, or at least temporary, component of their overall operational agendas. Several such organizations exist, notably including Hamas (Palestine), Palestinian Islamic Jihad (Palestine), al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade (Palestine), Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam(Sri Lanka), al-Qaeda (global), Hezbollah (Lebanon), the Kurdish Worker's Party (Turkey), the al-Jemaah al-Islamiyya network (Southeast Asia), and Chechen rebel entities (Russia). Four, however, are generally acknowledged to have shared a highly "intimate" relationship with martyrdom as a sustained tactic:

1. *Hezbollah*—This organization not only hailed the modern advent of suicide terrorism but also graphically demonstrated its remarkable coercive utility against both the United States and Israel.
2. *Hamas*—This organization has been at the forefront of Palestinian martyrdom for the past decade.
3. *Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam*—The Tamil Tigers are widely credited with being at the cutting edge of suicide technology and "expertise."
4. *al-Qaeda*—The group perpetrated the most destructive act of suicide terrorism to date and remains firmly committed to the ongoing use of the tactic in whatever manner possible.

The analysis presented underscores the potential danger of martyrdom to any country's stability. Not only does the U.S. domestic context in particular provide a target-rich environment in which to act (attack venues include everything from cinemas, shopping malls, and sports stadiums to offices, subways, and universities), the psychological effect of suicide bombings is likely to be especially great given the generally risk-averse nature of American society. Moreover, spokesmen representing al-Qaeda and/or its various affiliates—the main focus of Washington's global war on terror—have made it known that there is a plentiful supply of willing recruits who remain ready, willing, and able to mete out maximum coercive punishment on the civilian population.

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In terms of response options, the findings highlight several measures that could be taken to address the tactical and strategic dimensions of martyr attacks. In the short term, initiatives should focus on reducing the operational attractiveness of the internal U.S. setting. Logically, these should proceed in the context of homeland security, emphasizing (1) strengthened border and immigration control; (2) comprehensive and rationalized target hardening that proceeds on the basis of regular, empirically grounded risk-vulnerability assessments; and (3) civil defense and public awareness programs designed to enhance overall societal resilience and confidence. Just as importantly, groups that have already demonstrated a willingness to use suicide attacks as a way of striking out against the United States—which is or has been true of two of the groups covered in this study (al-Qaeda and Hezbollah)—should be subjected to intense intelligence scrutiny and, when necessary, to harassment actions aimed at disrupting their day-to-day activities and planning.

Over the longer term, a concerted effort should be directed toward reshaping the supportive environment surrounding the recruitment and training of martyrs. Critical in this regard will be policies aimed at empowering the voices of moderate communitarian ethnonationalist and religious leaders. If appropriately fostered and supported, these individuals could play a decisive role in helping to break the cycle of indoctrination that has proven so important to the normalization and, indeed, veneration of suicide terrorism, not least by confronting and challenging the inconsistencies and inadequacies of militant ideologues who seek to exonerate self-sacrifice from both a pragmatic and idealistic standpoint.

Finally, the United States should keep a close watch on extant and emergent extremist entities that revolve around personable leaderships espousing absolutist, Manichean doctrines and worldviews. These are the groups that are most likely to fully institutionalize unconventional tactics, such as suicide bombings, into operational agendas; to imbue these methods with an organizational ethos of

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permanence; and to refine the execution of these tactics through investment in dedicated research and development efforts.

It is hoped that this study will better inform U.S. decisionmakers and security analysts about the motivations for and manifestations of suicide terrorism, providing an empirical base from which to formulate and refine preemptive responses to thwart what may yet emerge as a characteristic form of extremist violence in this country.

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The authors wish to acknowledge the generous assistance provided throughout this project by Ami Pedahzur and Arie Perliger, the managers of the terrorism database at the University of Haifa's National Security Studies Center. The advice and guidance provided by our colleague in RAND's Washington Office, Kim Cragin, was equally invaluable. Both Brent Bradley and Rachel Swanger, who oversee RAND projects that, like this one, are funded by internal research and development resources, were extraordinarily patient and supportive throughout the duration of this long effort. From the beginning, Jerrold Green, formerly Director of RAND's Center for Middle East Public Policy, was an enthusiastic proponent of this work and provided the essential seed money that got it started.

We were fortunate to have as technical reviewers of this document one of the world's foremost authorities on terrorism and suicide terrorism, Rohan Gunaratna of the Institute of Defense and Security Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, and David Brannan of the RAND research staff, whose previous career in law enforcement and expertise in religious motivations of terrorism, enriched, and strengthened this report. We were equally fortunate to have this document edited by Phyllis Gilmore, whose sharp eye and keen sense of linguistic style greatly improved this work.

Finally, a special debt is owed to Suzanne Jones, who ably shepherded this document, and its draft predecessor, through the RAND publication process.

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It goes without saying that the views and information presented in this document are those of the authors only—as are any errors or mistakes that inadvertently may remain.

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Abbreviations

EIJ	Egyptian Islamic Jihad
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
IDF	Israeli Defense Forces
IID	Internal Intelligence Directorate (Colombo)
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MNF	Multinational (Peacekeeping) Force
NIB	National Intelligence Bureau (Colombo)
NIF	National Islamic Front
PA	Palestinian Authority
PIJ	Palestinian Islamic Jihad
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
R&D	research and development
SLA	South Lebanon Army
SLAF	Sri Lankan Armed Forces
SLN	Sri Lankan Navy
TNT	Tamil New Tigers
TUF	Tamil United Front
TULF	Tamil United Liberation Front
VIP	very important person

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

> By God, the youths of God are preparing for you things that would fill your hearts with terror and target your economic lifeline until you stop your oppression and aggression.
>
> *—Osama bin Laden, October 7, 2002*[1]

> The mujahideen nation [that] sent you the brigade of New York and Washington, has made its mind to send you brigades one after the other, carrying death and seeking paradise.
>
> *—Ayman al-Zawahiri, February 2004*[2]

America's enemies are marshaling their resources to continue the struggle that crystallized on September 11, 2001. Exactly what shape that struggle will take remains to be seen. But the arrests during summer 2004 of multiple al-Qaeda surveillance and planning cells in both Pakistan and Britain may provide some important clues. These cells are alleged to have plotted simultaneous suicide strikes on targets

[1] As quoted in Associated Press (2001).

[2] As quoted in Central Intelligence Agency (2004), p. 3.

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in several cities. Among the sites they had reconnoitered were the New York Stock Exchange and Citigroup buildings in New York City; the Prudential Plaza in Newark, New Jersey; and the World Bank and International Monetary Fund offices in Washington, D.C. (Hauser, 2004).

The aborted plot provided fresh evidence that the suicide bombers who struck the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11 will likely be followed by other suicide bombers attacking targets in the United States. Remarkably, even before September 11, suicide attacks in the United States had either been contemplated or been planned but thwarted. Timothy McVeigh considered a suicide bomb attack on the Alfred P. Murrah federal office building in Oklahoma City before finding a plan that did not require suicide (see Michel and Herbeck, 2001, pp. 102, 144–145, 332, and 358). Four years before September 11, two Palestinians plotted a suicide bombing of the New York City subway. Their plan was foiled when an informant tipped off police.[3] And, of course, suicide attacks have long been conducted against American diplomatic and military targets abroad, from the 1983 bombings of the U.S. embassies and Marine barracks in Beirut to the current campaign of suicide attacks in Iraq.

The spread of suicide terrorism worldwide further suggests that the United States will not remain immune from this threat. Trends in terrorism already point to suicide terrorism's rising worldwide popularity. In the 1970s, for instance, this threat hardly existed. Even fol-

---

[3] Their plans to bomb the B subway line, running from the northern tip of Manhattan to Coney Island on the south shore of Brooklyn, were foiled only because an informant told police. When they were arrested, the terrorists were probably less than a day away from attacking: According to law-enforcement authorities five bombs had been primed. Although the pair was never formally linked to any identifiable terrorist organization and appears to have concocted the plot on their own, there was no doubting their determination. "I always dreamed to be a martyr," one of the would-be bombers declared (see Pipes, 2002, pp. 201–202). Indeed, both men resisted arrest when police and FBI agents raided their apartment, and both were shot and wounded in the struggles that ensued—one while attempting to detonate the explosives. "I wouldn't call them sophisticated," Howard Safir, the commissioner of police at the time observed, "but they certainly were very dangerous." (See Safir, 1997.)

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lowing its emergence as a terrorist tactic in the 1980s, suicide attacks remained relatively infrequent, averaging only 2.5 per year throughout the 1990s. However, starting in 2001, the number increased to 41 per year, then to 45 in 2002, and 57 in 2003. Indeed, according to the RAND Terrorism Incident Database, some 70 percent of the suicide bombings recorded since 1968 have occurred since 2001 alone. Moreover, these attacks have spread geographically. To date, suicide attacks have occurred in some 23 countries around the globe—including Israel, Russia, Sri Lanka, Lebanon, Turkey, Italy, Indonesia, Pakistan, Colombia, Argentina, Kenya, Tanzania, Croatia, Morocco, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Iraq. And, as we know from the tragic events of September 11, the United States is no more able to stop all suicide bombers than any other targeted country.

Suicide attacks, as we saw clearly on September 11, differ from other terrorist operations precisely because the perpetrator's own death is essential for the attack's success. The potential perpetrators of such attacks in the United States can range from domestic right-wing extremists (such as McVeigh) to militant nationalists (such as the two Palestinians involved in the 1997 New York City subway attack plot) to radical Islamic jihadists (such as the 19 al-Qaeda operatives who hijacked the four commercial airline flights on September 11) and even to lone individuals without any organizational affiliation (such as the gunman who staged a suspected suicide attack at Los Angeles International Airport on July 4, 2002). As the last incident suggests, bombs and explosives are not the only weapons in an act of suicide terrorism: Firearms, knives, and other weapons can be involved. The most consequential suicide attacks in terms of casualties and effect, however, would be those involving a weapon capable of causing mass casualties, most likely a bomb or explosive device or a means of attack designed to generate some wider conflagration (e.g., crashing an aircraft laden with combustible jet fuel into a building, as on September 11).

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The purpose of this monograph, however, is not to survey the entire range of possible suicide attacks, the diversity of means of attack, or the spectrum of possible perpetrators. Rather, we seek to shed light on the phenomenon of suicide terrorism through an examination of four, equally formidable, terrorist movements that have long been among this tactic's foremost exponents: the Lebanese Shi'a group, Hezbollah, which pioneered the use of suicide terrorism during the 1980s and 1990s; the Palestinian organization Hamas, which has repeatedly employed this tactic in its struggle against Israel; the ethnic Tamil separatist organization known formally as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) or informally as the "Tamil Tigers"; and al-Qaeda, the Sunni radical jihadist movement and transnational terrorist organization founded and led by Osama bin Laden. Through these four case studies, we seek to illuminate both the similarities and differences between the organizational imperatives of these four movements that have respectively influenced their resort to this tactic, the motivations of the individual perpetrators within these movements who willingly execute suicide attacks, and the targeting and tactics of each movement and the decisionmaking processes and mindset behind their selection.[4] The report begins with a brief examination of the phenomenon of suicide terrorism before focusing on each of the four case studies. The concluding chapter assesses policy implications and potential future patterns of suicide terrorism.

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[4] This report does not consider the threat that so-called "lone wolves" pose in the United States: individuals who may engage in acts of suicide terrorism but who neither belong to, nor operate at the behest of, nor follow the orders of an established terrorist organization or other conspiratorially oriented collection of individuals. An example of a "lone wolf" threat occurred in July 2002 when Hashem Hadayat, a naturalized U.S. citizen born in Egypt, staged an armed attack at Israeli airline El Al's ticket counter in the Tom Bradley International Terminal at Los Angeles International Airport.

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CHAPTER TWO

The Phenomenon of Suicide Terrorism

Terrorism today is being transformed from a mode of conflict that was hitherto characterized by mostly limited and symbolic objectives to one that now manifests itself in a far more direct and lethal manner. Indeed, while past campaigns of political violence tended to take the form of often-symbolic bombing or sporadic hit-and-run attacks to gain attention and/or publicity, contemporary tactics are more akin to an outright war of attrition, in which the aim is to break the enemy through repeated acts of coercive punishment that are deliberately designed to shock and cause paralysis. As former Director of Central Intelligence, R. James Woolsey, noted a decade ago, terrorists "don't want a seat at the table, they want to destroy the table and everyone sitting at it" (National Commission on Terrorism, 2000, p. 2).

Suicide bombings have emerged as an intrinsic component of this new era of terrorism. Although not new—violent martyrdom had once been a prominent feature of Middle Eastern terrorism some 700 years before its dramatic reemergence in 1983[1]—both the scale and

[1] The phenomenon of martyrdom terrorism in Islam can be traced back to the Assassins, an offshoot of the Shi'a Ismaeli movement, who some 700 years ago waged a protracted struggle against the European Crusaders' attempted conquest of the Holy Land. The Assassins embraced an ethos of self-sacrifice, in which martyrdom was regarded as a sacramental act—a divine duty commanded by religious text and communicated by clerical authorities—that is still evident today. An important additional motivation then as now was the promise that the martyr would feel no pain in the commission of his sacred act and would then ascend immediately to a glorious heaven, described as a place replete with "rivers of milk and wine . . . lakes of honey, and the services of 72 virgins," where the martyr will see the face of Allah

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sophistication of this manifestation of terrorism have escalated markedly over the last few years. The stereotypical image of a suicide bomber is that of an irrational, homicidal fanatic—or at least an individual who is acutely maladjusted socially—usually originating from a highly impoverished family context and with little, if any, formal education.[2] However, when one takes a look at the background of martyrs, it is evident that they do not readily fit into this simplistic personification. As Scott Atran observes (2003, p. 11):

> Recruits are generally well-adjusted in their families and liked by peers, and often more educated and economically better off than their surrounding population. Researchers Basel Saleh and Claude Berrebi independently find that the majority of Palestinian suicide bombers have college education (versus 15% of the population of comparable age) and that less than 15% come from poor families (although about a third of the population lives in poverty). DIA [Defense Intelligence Agency] sources who have interrogated al-Qaeda detainees at Guatanamo note that Saudi-born operatives, especially those in leadership positions, are often "educated above reasonable employment level, a surprising number have graduate degrees and come from high-status families." . . . The general pattern was captured in a Singapore Parliamentary report on prisoners from Jemaah Islamiyah, an al-Qaeda ally [and widely believed to be behind the August 2003 suicide bombing of the U.S-owned Marriott Hotel in Jakarta]: "These men were not ignorant, destitute or disenfranchised. Like many of their counterparts in militant Islamic organizations in the region, they held normal, respect-

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and later be joined by 70 chosen relatives ("Wedded to Death in a Blaze of Glory," 1996). The seminal scholarly work on this phenomenon as it emerged in medieval times is Lewis (1985).

[2] For example, Senator John Warner once testified to the U.S. Congress that a new security doctrine of preemption was necessary because "those who would commit suicide in their assaults on the free world are irrational." Senator Trent Lott, equally exasperated with the deteriorating situation in Iraq, is on record for affirming: "If we have to, we just mow the whole place down. You're dealing with insane suicide bombers who are killing our people, and we need to be very aggressive in taking them out." (Both as quoted in Atran, 2003, pp. 10–11, 13.)

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able jobs. Most detainees regarded religion as their most personal value."

Far from being an irrational act of desperation, a decision to resort to suicide strikes is deliberately calculated and predicated on a reasoned cost-benefit analysis: Such attacks are cheaper, involve potentially higher levels of destruction, are less complex, and are generally more effective than other, more "conventional," manifestations of terrorism. In short, suicide terrorist tactics are adopted because they work and are instrumental in meeting the requirement of large-scale coercive punishment that has become so integral to the contemporary manifestation of extremist political violence. More specifically, they help to balance the military equation and thereby help offset the extant power asymmetries that are generally seen to characterize the relationship between state and nonstate actors.[3] How exactly does this dynamic work itself out?

First and most fundamentally, suicide attacks elicit enormous fear among the target audience, largely because perpetrators are viewed as "beyond the pale" in terms of one of the most basic human instincts—the desire to protect one's own life. Second, these tactics are cheap—generally costing no more than $150 to $200 per assault—and do not require elaborate escape or rescue plans (often the most problematic component of a terrorist operation). Third, assaults can be carried out in a way that causes maximum carnage because the martyr is able to choose the exact time, location, and circumstances of the attack—in essence transforming him or herself into the ultimate "smart bomb." Fourth, there is minimal possibility of terrorists being captured and revealing important tactical information under interrogation because their deaths are largely assured. Finally, the use of suicide cadres on planes—as evidenced on September 11—has effectively shown that strikes can now not be stopped without assuring loss of civilian life; essentially, the only way to stop a

[3] See, for instance, Pape (2003), pp. 4–5; Sprinzak (2000), pp. 66–68; and Ganor (2000).

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martyr or group of martyrs that has commandeered a jet is to shoot the plane down and accept the loss of all on board.

Ramadan Shalah, the Secretary-General of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) graphically summarized the chilling strategic logic of the suicide bomber as derived from the aforementioned considerations (as reported in Sprinzak, 2000, p. 68):

> Our enemy possesses the most sophisticated weapons in the world and its army is trained to a very high standard . . . . We have nothing with which to repel killing and thuggery against us except the weapon of martyrdom. It is easy and costs us only our lives . . . human bombs cannot be stopped, not even by nuclear bombs.

The key to understanding suicide terrorism is not attempting to profile individual bombers but examining the strategic, practical, and ideological experiences of groups that have employed this mode of violence as an integral, or at least temporary, component of their overall operational agendas. Several such organizations exist, notably including Hamas (Palestine), PIJ (Palestine), al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade (Palestine), LTTE (Sri Lanka), al-Qaeda (global), Hezbollah (Lebanon), the Kurdish Worker's Party (Turkey), the al-Jemaah al-Islamiyya network (Southeast Asia), and Chechen rebel entities (Russia). Four, however, are generally acknowledged to have shared a highly "intimate" relationship with martyrdom as a sustained tactic:

1. *Hezbollah*—This organization not only hailed the modern advent of suicide terrorism but also graphically demonstrated its remarkable coercive utility against both the United States and Israel.
2. *Hamas*—This organization has been at the forefront of Palestinian martyrdom for the past decade.
3. *LTTE*—The Tamil Tigers are widely credited with being at the cutting edge of suicide technology and "expertise."
4. *al-Qaeda*—This group perpetrated the most destructive act of suicide terrorism to date and remains firmly committed to the ongoing use of the tactic in whatever manner possible.

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By focusing on these four movements as case studies, we seek to address their pertinence for the use and development of suicide terrorism as a specific operational method. The four organizations are assessed in terms of their historical background; the attendant ideological and operational factors that led to the adoption (and, when relevant, curtailment) of martyrdom; their methods for recruiting, indoctrinating, and venerating cadres; and the particular methods they have used in pursuing these unconventional tactics.

It is hoped that this study will better inform U.S. decisionmakers and security analysts about the motivation and manifestation of suicide terrorism, providing an empirical base from which to formulate and refine preemptive responses to thwart what may yet emerge as a characteristic form of extremist violence in this country.

For the purpose of this report, *terrorism* is defined as the deliberate use or threat to use indiscriminate violence against noncombatant targets for the purpose of achieving political ends—the ends depending on the specific ideological agenda of the group in question. *Suicide terrorism*—or, more correctly, *martyrdom*—is an extreme version of this tactic, in which the death of the perpetrator is integral to the success of the attack.[4] It is a form of aggression that is based on two main prerequisites: a desire to kill and an active and positive commitment to die in furtherance of that act. This conceptualization excludes instances in which

- the perpetrator kills himself or herself to avoid capture by security forces
- the perpetrator kills himself or herself out of remorse

[4] *Suicide terrorism* is really a misnomer because those who engage in attacks involving deliberate self-sacrifice characteristically view their actions as heroic gestures, not expressions of hopeless resignation. Moreover, at least in the case of religious extremists, they typically do not conceive of their deaths as final but rather as a means of entering eternal paradise. In this sense, it is more appropriate to term these terrorists *martyrs* because their deaths are seen as neither terminal nor futile. Throughout this report, however, *martyrdom* and *suicide terrorism* will be used interchangeably, largely because the latter term has gained widespread currency.

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- the perpetrator is killed in the process of executing an attack in which he or she expects to die, although there is a possible means of escape, however slight
- the death of the perpetrator is accidental and/or unplanned (including cases in which terrorists blow themselves up while preparing and/or transporting explosives for a suicide strike)
- an individual kills himself or herself to elicit sympathy and/or understanding—rather than terror—from the target audience (for example, by engaging in hunger strikes and/or carrying out self-immolation).

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CHAPTER THREE

Hezbollah

Modern-day suicide terrorism is generally acknowledged to have begun with the sustained series of bombings that took place in Lebanon between April and October 1983.[1] Four major incidents occurred during this period—an attack on the U.S. embassy, simultaneous strikes against the French and American contingents of the Multinational (Peacekeeping) Force (MNF) in Beirut, and the bombing of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) headquarters in Tyre—collectively killing 424 people.[2] The acts were directly responsible for the withdrawal of the MNF and were championed by a hitherto unknown organization calling itself Hezbollah.[3]

[1] The first suicide terrorist operation of this period in fact occurred two years earlier, when an Iraqi Shi'a group, calling itself al-Dawa, bombed the Iraqi Embassy in Beirut. This was, however, the only such attack and should be distinguished from the strategic, sustained campaign of suicide car and truck bombings that Hezbollah subsequently unleashed.

[2] Sixty-three people died in the attack on the U.S. embassy, 299 in the combined bombings of the American and French military bases (241 and 58, respectively), and 60 in the assault on the IDF headquarters in Tyre (Quillen, 2002, pp. 295–296). Hezbollah, as an organization, never formally claimed credit for the first two attacks—and instead used a nom de guerre, Islamic Jihad. U.S. officials allege that the group's former security chief, Imad Mughniyah, planned the 1983 attacks and have since listed him as one the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) most wanted international terrorists (Kushner, 2003, p. 167).

[3] Hezbollah has been known by a variety of names, including Party of God, Ansar Allah, Followers of the Prophet Muhammed, Islamic Jihad, the Revolutionary Justice Organization, Organization of the Oppressed on Earth, Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Organization of Right Against Wrong (see U.S. Department of State, 2003, p. 108, and Kushner, 2003, p. 165).

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Background

Hezbollah's emergence took place against the backdrop of the Lebanese civil war and the Islamic Revolution in Iran, two major events that have had an enduring influence on the politics and security of the Middle East. Following its creation in 1943,[4] Lebanon initially enjoyed a reputation as a successful experiment in ethnoreligious accommodation, which, through a complex form of multirepresentative governance, had effectively balanced the interests of its Christian Maronite, Armenian Orthodox, Catholic, Druze, Shi'a, and Sunni communities (hence the country's designation as the "Switzerland of the Middle East").[5] Gradually, however, cleavages emerged between these various ethnoreligious communities, fueled in large part by demographic changes that led to a rising Muslim population but no concomitant redistribution of political representation and/or socioeconomic wealth. The situation was further complicated when, after the 1967 Six Day War, Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) terrorists and affiliated groups increasingly began to use southern Lebanon as a staging base for cross-border attacks into Israel. Many Christian Lebanese vigorously opposed the presence of these Palestinian groups along the border with Israel, merely seeing the displaced guerrillas as contributing to instability along the country's southern region, not least by acting as a lightening rod for Israeli military retaliation (Thackrah, 1987, p. 137).[6]

Tensions were significantly exacerbated in 1970 with the arrival of 300,000 Palestinian exiles from Jordan following "Black Septem-

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[4] In 1919, Lebanon became a French protectorate, along with Syria. The two territories were separated for administrative purposes, with the former gaining independence in 1943 and the latter in 1946.

[5] Lebanon's independence constitution provided for (1) a Maronite president, (2) a Sunni prime minister; (3) a Shi'a speaker in the Chamber of Deputies, and (3) a divided Muslim-Christian National Assembly split according to a 5-to-6 ratio.

[6] See also Bissio (2001), pp. 338–339. Ironically, the same Christian militias would eventually form the IDF's main proxy in the country, in the guise of the South Lebanon Army (SLA).

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ber," the month in 1970 when Jordanian forces expelled the PLO, which then relocated its terrorist operational bases to Lebanon. Southern Lebanon now became the primary launching pad for terrorist operations targeting Israel, which both caused Israel to step up the tempo of its cross-border attacks and triggered a series of bloody onslaughts on refugee camps by right-wing Phalangist extremists.[7] Outright civil war erupted in 1975 between Christians, Muslims, and Palestinians. Although Syrian forces managed to halt the fighting briefly when they intervened as part of an Arab League peace mission the following year, instability soon returned as countless independent militias arose and became embroiled in interfactional fighting on the basis of their own idiosyncratic agendas.[8] At the same time, Palestinians continued to stage armed attacks from southern Lebanon and had, by now, established several fortified safe areas in Beirut. In an effort to destroy this cross-border militant presence once and for all, the IDF invaded Lebanon in 1982. Some 7,000 guerrillas were subsequently trapped in the capital and, following an agreement brokered by the United States and other Western powers, evacuated from the country under international supervision (effectively marking the collapse of this particular component of the PLO infrastructure). Thereafter, the Israelis moved to deploy large-scale military contingents across southern Lebanon, remaining a de facto occupation force until 1985 (Thackrah, 1987, p. 138; Bissio, 2001, p. 339).[9]

Violence continued during 1982, including the assassination of President Bashir Gemayel, a Christian, and the subsequent massacre of 1,000 Palestinian civilians at the Sabra and Shatila refugee

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[7] Originally founded in 1936 by Pierre Gemayel, the Phalangists served as the main political and military force of the Maronite Church during the Lebanese civil war and one of the principal opponents of the growing Arab influence in the country.

[8] Syria remained a significant force in Lebanon, particularly in the Beqqa Valley. During the 1980s, Syria allowed the valley to become a major militant Shi'a Islamic training ground under the auspices of Hezbollah.

[9] For more information on Israeli measures against the PLO during this period, see Black and Morris (1991).

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camps.[10] This eventually led to the dispatch of a multinational force (MNF) drawn mainly from the United States, Britain, France, and Italy. Comprising 5,800 troops, many of whom had facilitated the earlier evacuation of PLO guerillas, the military coalition sought to stabilize the immediate situation in Beirut and then provide additional backing for the consolidation of a viable Lebanese government.[11]

It was around this time that Hezbollah first emerged as a prominent player on this complex stage.[12] The group arose as an amalgam of radical Shi'a factions, with many of its founding members drawn from Amal—then the principal (Shi'a) resistance organization in Lebanon—substantial numbers of whom rejected the latter's willingness to negotiate with Israel.[13] From its inception, Hezbollah enjoyed a close relationship with Iran, which, under the theocratic regime of Ayatollah Khomeini, had shown an active and growing interest in Lebanese internal affairs and politics. This became particularly evident after the collapse of the PLO (which had run a virtual state within a state between 1975 and 1982) and the resulting power vacuum. Seeking to exploit the emergent situation to its advantage, Tehran moved to establish Hezbollah as a conduit through which to advance its strategic interests in Lebanon, becoming the group's chief external patron financially, militarily, and diplomatically. This aid

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[10] Although no group claimed responsibility for the massacre, the attacks are generally recognized to have been the work of right-wing Phalangist Christian militiamen (allegedly acting with the implicit endorsement, if not direct encouragement, of the IDF) in revenge for the assassination of President Gemayel.

[11] See, for instance, Global Security (undated).

[12] For detailed discussions of the historical origins and subsequent development of Hezbollah, see Ranstorp (1997), Jabber (1997), Harak (2004), Pelletiere (1994), and Saad-Ghorayeb (2002).

[13] *Amal* is an acronym for *Afwaj al-Muquwamah al-Lubnaiyyah* (also known as the Lebanese Resistance Detachment). Musa as Sadr formed the group in 1975 to be the military wing of the Movement of the Disinherited. Between 1983 and 1989, Hezbollah and Amal engaged in numerous clashes, but by the end of the 1980s, the latter had been effectively destroyed as a viable organization, allowing the former to assume control of all Shi'a factions in Lebanon. (See "Amal Movement," undated.)

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included stationing 1,500 Pasadaran (Revolutionary Guards) in the Beqqa Valley (with the sanction of Syria, the main sovereign political power in the area) to train militants, supply arms, and back the power plays that the group periodically confronted with extant political forces in Lebanon (Israeli Foreign Ministry, undated; Zisser, 1996, p. 93; Israeli Foreign Ministry, 1998; Cragin and Daly, 2004; and Jaber, 1997). In addition, Hezbollah directly benefited from Iran's economic largesse, receiving tens of millions of dollars annually (if not more), providing a "healthy" fiscal baseline that would eventually facilitate the group's expansion into the spheres of education, health, and welfare.[14]

While the Ayatollah Khomeini sought to establish Hezbollah as a dedicated Iranian proxy, the latter quickly carved out its own defining agenda. Combining a universalistic view of the *ummah* (which incorporates both Arab and non-Arab Muslims)[15] with strong nationalistic rhetoric, this agenda came to have two preeminent goals: (1) the eradication of all "Godless" foreign influences in Lebanon and (2) the subsequent institution of a pure and just Islamic order in the state. The group's original ideological platform, published in February 1985, is categorical on these interrelated objectives (as reported in Zisser, 1996, p. 97):

> The solution to Lebanon's problems is the establishment of an Islamic republic as only this type of regime can secure justice and equality for all of Lebanon's citizens. The Hezbollah organization views as an important goal the fight against "western imperialism" and its eradication from Lebanon. The group strives for complete American and French withdrawal from

[14] The annual Iranian contribution to Hezbollah during the 1980s has been estimated as ranging between tens of millions to $350 million. For further details of Hezbollah's social welfare activities, see Norton (1990), p. 127, and Norton (1998), pp. 156–178.

[15] Although Hezbollah developed its own defining agenda, it is important to note that the group affirms Khumayni as the divinely inspired ruler of the ummah (and Ali Khamini as the true "Legal Guardian of the Muslims" today), which necessarily places Iran at the center of the group's religious and pan-Islamic worldview. (See Saad-Ghorayeb, 2002, pp. 64–87.)

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> Lebanon, including all their institutions. The conflict with Israel is a central concern. This is not only limited to the IDF presence in Lebanon. Rather, the complete destruction of the State of Israel and the establishment of Islamic rule over Jerusalem is an expressed goal.

In pursuit of this agenda, Hezbollah enumerated the following immediate practical goals for the organization (Zisser, 1996, p. 97; Hizballah, 1985, pp. 5–6):

- to drive Israel out of Lebanon as a prelude to its complete annihilation and the liberation of Jerusalem
- to force the United States, France, and their allies out of Lebanon and to eradicate all traces of their presence in the country
- to subjugate Christian Phalangists and bring them to justice for their crimes against Muslims and Palestinians, perpetrated with the encouragement of the United States and Israel
- to give full freedom of choice to the Lebanese people to determine their fate and form of governance, ideally in accordance with Hezbollah's own commitment to the establishment of a pure Islamic state.

While the last aspect of this program resonates with moderation and pragmatism—and notwithstanding the organization's undoubted commitment to social welfare and communitarian development (which has earned it a considerable broad-based following)—much of Hezbollah's focus has been highly radical. Indeed for the bulk of its existence, the group has tended to view the destruction of Israel and the struggle against U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East as first- and second-order priorities, outranking the long-term aim of fully Islamizing Lebanon (U.S. Department of State, 2003, p. 108; Zisser, 1996, p. 93; Strindberg and Warn, 2003, p. 23). This predilection to violence and militantism is evidenced by Hezbollah's hierarchical

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organizational structure,[16] which both closely mirrors the revolutionary regime Khomeini originally set up and gives prominence to a dedicated armed wing—Islamic Resistance.[17] This wing has remained responsible for managing the group's guerrilla and terrorist operations, including those associated with suicide strikes.[18]

Hezbollah's Use of Suicide Terrorism: 1983–2000

Unlike other, later terrorist groups that pursued suicide terrorist tactics only later in their development (e.g., Hamas and LTTE, as discussed below), Hezbollah embraced martyrdom almost as soon as the group was created. Indeed, it was with the string of suicide bombings in 1983 that the movement first crashed onto the stage of world politics and international terrorism. In the best-planned and most-destructive of these operations—the October 23 simultaneous attacks on the U.S. and French components of the MNF in Beirut[19]—241 American marines and 58 French paratroopers were killed, an act that set in motion the subsequent withdrawal of the entire international peacekeeping presence from Lebanon. The force and attendant implications of the strikes took security experts by complete surprise, her-

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[16] At the apex of the Hezbollah structure is an advisory-consultative council (the *Majlis al-Shura*), which is currently headed by Secretary General Hasan Nasrallah and composed of senior religious sages. The council is supported by an executive committee, which is responsible for subordinate political, financial, educational, and propaganda bureaus. Hezbollah's military wing operates independently of the executive committee and is responsible for managing training bases, weapon stores, recruitment, and guerrilla and terrorist operations directed against Israel. (Zisser, 1996, p. 99; U.S. Department of State, 2003, p. 108; Kurz et al., 1993, pp. 43–45.)

[17] Although Hezbollah has a wider support base—between 20,000 and 25,000—Islamic Resistance has never exceeded 4,000 members; cadres are typically organized according to geography and task, usually in 50-man units. (Author interview, military officials in Tel Aviv, Israel, April 2004.)

[18] It is worth noting that even Hezbollah's clerics participate in armed attacks and frequently fight alongside operational units on the ground.

[19] The attack on the Marine barracks involved 1,000 lbs of explosives.

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alding the dawn of a new type of militant extremism that effectively defied all (then) existing defensive postures. As Sprinzak observes (2000, p. 66):

> [The] tactic stunned security experts. Two centuries of experience suggested that terrorists, though ready to risk their lives, wished to live life after the terrorist act in order to benefit from its accomplishments. But this new terrorism defied that belief. It seemed qualitatively different, appearing almost supernatural, extremely lethal and impossible to stop. Within six months French and U.S. Presidents Francois Mitterrand and Ronald Reagan pulled their troops out of Lebanon—a tacit admission that the new terrorism rendered all known counterterrorist measures useless.

To be sure, Hezbollah seems to have grasped the strategic and tactical benefits of suicide terrorism at an early stage, particularly in terms of leveling asymmetric strategic military balances through low-cost, simple, yet highly destructive tactics. According to the group's spiritual leader, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, Hezbollah had no alternative but to move immediately to martyr-style attacks, given the advanced force configuration of the specific enemies it confronted:

> When a conflict breaks out between oppressed nations and imperialism, or between two hostile governments, the parties to the conflict seek ways to complete the elements of their power and to neutralize the weapons used by the other side. For example, the oppressed nations do not have the technology and destructive weapons America and [Israel] have. They must thus fight with special means of their own. [We] recognize the right . . . to use *every* [authors' emphasis] unconventional method to fight these aggressor nations.[20]

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[20] From a November 14, 1985 interview with Fadlallah, as recorded in Kramer (2002), p. 288.

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The startling success of the 1983 bombings—pointedly demonstrated by the reversals precipitated in American (and French) foreign policy—merely confirmed the perceived utility of the suicide bomber and entrenched an internal belief that Hezbollah's future influence would be directly tied to the continued deployment of this particular mode of violence (Zisser, 1996, p. 105). Indeed, the events of 1983 are often portrayed as one of the most clear-cut cases demonstrating the coercive success of suicide terrorism in inflicting unacceptable punishment and damage (Pape, 2003, p. 10). As President Reagan later explained in his memoirs (1990, p. 465): "The price we had to pay in Beirut was so great, the tragedy at the barracks so enormous . . . . We had to pull out . . . . We couldn't stay there and run the risk of another suicide attack on the Marines."

Following the withdrawal of the MNF, Hezbollah redirected its operations to forcing the expulsion of the IDF contingents that remained in place across much of the country.[21] In this effort, the group was again largely successful. Two years later, the Israeli military initiated its own evacuation from Beirut, redeploying to a thin, 10-mile security belt in southern Lebanon (where it remained for the next 15 years, coordinating control of the buffer zone with the proxy SLA) (Sprinzak, 2000, p. 70; Atran, 2003, p. 2).

Overall, Hezbollah carried out 25 suicide bombings against Western and Jewish targets between 1983 and the end of 1985, an intensive spate of violence that left a total of 647 people dead (see Table 1). It should be noted, however, that the majority of these attacks were directed against military targets, which differs markedly from the targets of other organizations that have engaged in these

[21] Hezbollah's ability to conduct such operations was largely thanks to the good offices of Syria—the major power in the Beqqa Valley—which allowed the group to retain its weapons until a full Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon was completed.

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Table 1
Hezbollah Suicide Attacks, 1983–1985

Date	Method	Target	Killed
April 18, 1983	Car bomb	U.S. embassy, Beirut	63
October 23, 1983	Car bomb	U.S. Marine barracks, Beirut	241
October 23, 1983	Car bomb	French barracks, Beirut	58
November 4, 1983	Car bomb	IDF post, Tyre	60
December 12, 1983	Grenades	U.S. embassy, Kuwait	7
December 21, 1983	Car bomb	French HQ, Beirut	1
June 16, 1984	Car bomb	IDF post, southern Lebanon	5
September 1984	Truck bomb	U.S. embassy, Beirut	14
March 8, 1985	Truck bomb	IDF post, southern Lebanon	12
April 9, 1985	Car bomb	IDF post, southern Lebanon	4
May 9, 1985	Suitcase bomb	SLA checkpoint, southern Lebanon	2
June 15, 1985	Car bomb	IDF post, Beirut	23
July 9, 1985	Car bombs	2 SLA outposts, southern Lebanon	22
July 15, 1985	Car bomb	SLA outpost	10
July 31, 1985	Car bomb	IDF patrol, southern Lebanon	2
August 6, 1985	Mule bomb	SLA outpost, southern Lebanon	0
August 29, 1985	Car bomb	SLA outpost, southern Lebanon	15
September 3, 1985	Car bomb	SLA outpost, southern Lebanon	37
September 12, 1985	Car bomb	SLA outpost, southern Lebanon	21
September 17, 1985	Car bomb	SLA outpost, southern Lebanon	30
September 18, 1985	Car bomb	SLA outpost, southern Lebanon	0
October 17, 1985	Grenades	SLA radio station, southern Lebanon	6
November 4, 1985	Car bomb	SLA outpost, southern Lebanon	0
November 12, 1985	Car bomb	Christian militias, southern Lebanon	5
November 26, 1985	Car bomb	SLA outpost, southern Lebanon	20

SOURCE: Adapted from Pape (2003), p. 15, and based on figures derived from the RAND Terrorism Chronology database.

tactics, whose emphasis has very much been on maximizing civilian casualties.[22] Two factors would seem to account for the dissimilarity. First, Hezbollah's own self-defined justification for martyrdom as a method that is both necessary and effective in overcoming asym-

[22] One arguable exception is LTTE, which, despite carrying out periodic suicide strikes against civilian and noncombatant targets, has tended to focus the bulk of its attacks on members of the Sri Lankan Armed Forces (SLAF).

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metric force ratios on the battlefield (see Table 1). Second, the group's own determination to cast its operational activities as part of a broader political—and, hence, legitimate—struggle.

From 1985 onward, the basic objective of Hezbollah insurgent strategy was to complete eviction of the IDF from Lebanon and to eradicate the forces of its main proxy in the country, the SLA. While the majority of these assaults were aimed at forces deployed in the southern security zone, the group allegedly struck well beyond this theater on two occasions—carrying out suicide bombings of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires in 1992 and of a Jewish community center, again in the Argentine capital, in 1994. In both cases, these extraregional operations are believed to have been undertaken as a form of retaliation and deterrence (ostensibly to demonstrate that the group retained the capacity to operate far beyond the Middle East),[23] the first reportedly in response to the killing of Hezbollah's then–Secretary General, Abbas Musawi, the second arguably in reaction to an aerial assault on a Hezbollah training camp in Ein Dardara (Schwitzer, 2000, p. 2; Quillen, 2002, p. 295).[24] Combined, the two attacks killed 76 and injured over 450 (Quillen, 2002, p. 297–298). Both at the time of these attacks and since, Hezbollah has consistently denied responsibility for them, and protracted Argentine judicial efforts have failed to establish conclusive responsibility for the attacks (see Comision Bicameral, 1999).

In 2000, the IDF announced the withdrawal of its forces from Lebanon. Hezbollah claimed—and numerous other Islamist groups

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[23] Several Israeli commentators argue that the attacks were more a reflection of Hezbollah's growing military weakness than a physical demonstration of forceful retaliation—pointing out that the bombings came at a time when the group was literally besieged by the IDF and was arguably finding it increasingly difficult to sustain the escalation-counterescalation battle with the military. (Author interviews, military officials in Haifa and Herzilya, April 2004.)

[24] In 1999, the Argentine government issued an international arrest warrant for Hezbollah's security chief, Imad Mughniyah, alleging that he was the mastermind behind the attack on the Israeli embassy; as noted in footnote 2, Mughniya had already been included on the FBI's most wanted list of terrorists for his reputed role in the 1983 bombings of American military and diplomatic missions in Beirut.

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perceived—that the decision was largely predicated on the relentless use of suicide attacks on the IDF and SLA.[25] As Ramadan Shalah, a PIJ leader, opined:

> The shameful defeat that Israel suffered in southern Lebanon and which caused its army to flee in terror was not made on the negotiation table but on the battlefield and through jihad and martyrdom, which achieved a great victory for the Islamic resistance and Lebanese people . . . . We would not exaggerate if we said that the chances of achieving victory in Palestine are greater than in Lebanon . . . . If the enemy could not bear the losses of the war on the border strip with Lebanon, will it be able to withstand a long war of attrition in the heart of its security dimension and major cities?[26]

To be sure, the growing injury toll of Jewish casualties and popular criticism associated with what by the end of the 1990s had become known as the "IDF's Vietnam" were major factors behind the Israeli decision to withdraw from southern Lebanon. However, the exact role that suicide terrorism played in influencing this thinking is less certain. As Sprinzak and Schweitzer note, the overall tempo of martyrdom strikes dropped markedly after 1985, with 1986 seeing only three completed missions (see Table 2)—none of which were specifically directed against Israeli forces. Indeed, other than the attacks in Argentina, no subsequent acts of martyrdom have since been linked directly to Hezbollah; Sprinzak and Schweitzer both concur that this curtailment of activity reflects altered cost-benefit calculations that, while not ruling out suicide attacks entirely, did reduce their perceived value as a *sustained* and systematic tactic (Sprinzak 2000, p. 70; Schweitzer, 2001, p. 3).

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[25] See, generally, Tsfati and Weimann (2002). Ibrahim Nasseer al-Din, a senior Hezbollah military leader has claimed "by means of the Internet Hezbollah has succeeded in entering the homes of Israelis, creating an important psychological breakthrough."

[26] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, November 3, 2001, as reported in Pape (2003), p. 355. See also Strindberg and Warn (2003), p. 23.

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Table 2
Hezbollah Suicide Attacks, 1986

Date	Method	Target	Killed
April 7, 1986	Car bomb	SLA outpost, southern Lebanon	1
July 17, 1986	Car bomb	Jezzine, southern Lebanon	7
November 20, 1986	Car bomb	SLA outpost, southern Lebanon	3

SOURCES: Pape (2003), p. 15, and the RAND Terrorism Chronology.

Three specific factors appear to have been integral to this recalibration. First, Israeli security procedures had become more concerted, particularly in terms of preemptively identifying and apprehending suicide terrorists. Second, Hezbollah's access to better weaponry and military hardware from Syria and Iran had improved,[27] which expanded the opportunities for conventional operations against the IDF and SLA. Finally, Hezbollah was determined to mold a somewhat more acceptable face for the organization following the signing of the 1989 Ta'if Agreement,[28] which marked the formal end of the Lebanese civil war (Zisser, 1996, pp. 100–103; Kramer, 2002, p. 292).

Hezbollah's post-2000 stance on the utility of martyrdom is difficult to determine. On the one hand, the movement's leaders—no longer preoccupied with expelling Israeli forces from the southern security zone—have tended to focus more on political activity, taking the position that extreme violence is neither necessary nor particularly conducive to securing the long-term social and political interests of

[27] Equipment allegedly provided by these two states included BGM-71 tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided missiles; remote-detonated roadside bombs; and high-tech specialized devices, such as night-vision goggles. RAND Interview, Tel Aviv, April 2004. See also "Hizballah Masters the TOW" (2000).

[28] The Ta'if Agreement, signed on October 22, 1989, established the foundations of a new Lebanese political order under Syrian patronage. The accord replaced the independence constitution of 1943, stipulating full parity between Muslim and Christian delegates in the National Assembly and extending the authority of the Sunni prime minister and Shi'a parliamentary speaker—both of whom were accorded equal status with the president (who remained a Maronite). For further details, see Norton (1991); Nasr, (1990), pp. 4–9; and Byman (2002), pp. 145–148.

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the Lebanese Shi'a community.[29] Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's Secretary General, implicitly affirmed that this would be the stance of the group in an interview with Antoine Kehday, a journalist with the *Middle East Insight* magazine, just prior to the IDF's redeployment in May 2000 (Nasrallah, 2000):

> [L]et it be understood that once that region [southern Lebanon] is freed [from Israeli occupation], Hezbollah will not exercise any security measures there. That is indisputable, because the region will be under the sovereignty of the Lebanese government . . . Hezbollah is a resistance movement that aims at liberating the occupied territories and is not a substitute for the government.

On the other hand, there are signs that the deteriorating Palestinian-Israeli peace process and the conflict in Iraq may be feeding pressure for the return to a more-extreme posture, including, possibly, the resumption of suicide assaults. Indeed, according to Israel's General Security Service (Shin Bet), Hezbollah is currently working with Palestinian militants to recruit and train martyrs in Gaza—the current operational crux of Palestinian terrorist organizations, such as Hamas—and has already bankrolled several attacks on Jewish targets, including two bombings that took place in January and February 2004, leaving 19 civilians dead.[30] The Israelis further claim the group instigated and possibly even planned a March 2004 operation that aimed to destroy a series of fuel storage tanks located near the Port of

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[29] Over the past five years, Hezbollah has been slowly transforming itself into a political organization and, at the time of writing, held nine affiliated and three nonaffiliated seats in Parliament.

[30] "Hezbollah Increasing Terror Activity" (2004); Associated Press (2004b). On February 25, IDF troops raided three Palestinian banks, seizing some $9 million. According to Shin Bet, a significant percentage of the money was held by the al-Ansar Charity Association, which government authorities allege Hezbollah uses to transfer funds to families of Palestinian suicide bombers and prisoners arrested for terrorist offences.

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Ashdod, using two Palestinian martyrs smuggled out of Gaza in shipping containers.[31]

Potentially more serious was the June 2004 discovery of a Web site that openly called for Iranian suicide cadres to kill Israelis, Americans (both in Iraq and around the world), and Salman Rushdie (the novelist that Ayatollah Khomeini condemned to death in 1989 following the publication of his book, *The Satanic Verses*). The site included several pronouncements glorifying martyrdom as "deified in paradise and venerated on earth," as well as a virtual job application for would-be bombers to complete and submit ("Global Jihad," 2004). The English translation of this recruitment form reads as follows:

> In the Name of God
> Preliminary Registration for Martyrdom Operations
> I_____, child of_____, born 13_____[Islamic calendar] in the City of_____ proclaim my preparedness for carrying out martyrdom operations:
> __ against the occupiers of the holy sites [referring to Najaf, Karbala and other places in Iraq]
> __ against the occupiers of [Jerusalem]
> __ for carrying out the death sentence of the infidel Salman Rushdie
> Also, I would like to become an active member of the Army of Martyrs of the International Islamic Movement. Yes___, No _____
> Contact telephone:
> Applicant's address:
> Applicant's signature:

While the recruitment appeal was posted by a group calling itself the Committee for the Commemoration of Martyrs of the Global Islamic Campaign, the specific reference to Iranians and Salman

[31] "Hezbollah Had a Role in Ashdod Bombing" (2004).

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Rushdie could, arguably, be indicative of a Hezbollah hand—which has often used front names to distance itself from overt militant activities. If this is in fact the case, the site provides disturbing evidence that Hezbollah may once again be preparing to commence suicide attacks as a concerted strategy, especially when viewed in conjunction with the aforementioned Shin Bet intelligence assessments.

The Operational and Moral Mechanics of Hezbollah Suicide Terrorism

Unlike LTTE (discussed in Chapter Five), Hezbollah never moved to create a permanent suicide squad. However, the group did retain specialist units and handlers who were used to identify, enlist, indoctrinate, and "transport" bombers to undertake specific operations (Sprinzak, 2000, pp. 69–70). Selected candidates were usually single men with strong religious beliefs and an explicit conviction to jihad and holy war. Most were also highly patriotic, deeply resentful of Israel, and typically motivated by a profound sense of victimization. Following several days of intensive religious discussion and psychological preparation, martyrs would explain the purpose and rationale of their mission in a final videotaped message. Operatives would then shave their beards and adopt standard Western clothing to hide any outward visible sign that they were Shi'a before being taken to their intended target, which would generally have been selected well in advance.[32]

In terms of specific methods, the overwhelming majority of Hezbollah suicide strikes have taken the form of car and truck explosions—accounting for 24 of the 28 attacks executed between 1983 and the end of 1986. A favored tactic involved detonating rigged automobiles while pulling up alongside IDF/SLA convoys, a highly

[32] See, for instance, Jaber (1997).

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successful method that usually resulted in the death of all members of the targeted patrol.[33] Early help from Iran, combined with a proven ability to "learn" and internalize outside assistance, allowed the group to quickly perfect the "art" of vehicular bomb construction at an early stage, including, notably, the technical skill associated with blast wave amplification. Indeed, some of Hezbollah's most decisive assaults were achieved through the generation of a high-intensity "shock velocity" designed to cause the greatest possible mushrooming effect. Perhaps the best example of this was the 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires. The attack involved a comparatively small amount of explosive material (220 pounds, rather than the 400 pounds that was used against the Beirut mission in 1983), yet it leveled the entire building at an overall casualty count of 280 (30 dead, 250 injured) (Quillen, 2002, p. 297). More to the point, the Argentine operation took place a full seven years after the last martyr strike in Lebanon, demonstrating that Hezbollah had not only preserved the knowledge of how to conduct successful suicide bombings but had also apparently increased its overall proficiency in carrying out such strikes.

Besides car and truck bombs, Hezbollah has also demonstrated the capacity to perpetrate more-discrete suicide attacks. The group developed and refined several methods for striking IDF and SLA military outposts and checkpoints in southern Lebanon, with lone or pedestrian martyrs using everything from explosive vests to rigged animals and suitcases to deliver their payloads (Sprinzak, 2000, p. 68; Pape, 2003, p. 15; Terrorism Research Center, 1997; Wei, 2003, Table 1.1; Schweitzer, 2001, p. 5). Hamas and PIJ would later replicate some of these methods and apply them to civilian targets as part of their own campaign of suicide bombings during the al-Aqsa Intifada (see Chapter Four).

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[33] Hamas has used a similar technique in Israel (though against civilian targets), detonating car bombs as they pull up alongside passenger buses; there have also been periodic instances of this form of terrorism in Iraq.

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Following the execution of a suicide strike, perpetrators would be listed on Hezbollah's official Web site, venerated in commemorative marches, and hailed as heroes who were now enjoying all the promised fruits of the afterlife (Townsend, 2002, p. 105; Tsfati and Weimann, 2002, p. 321). These visual displays of honor and respect, combined with the spiritual affirmations they engendered, became important sources of inspiration for future would-be bombers and constituted a recruitment method that other Middle Eastern groups, such as Hamas and PIJ, would follow (see Chapter Four). To solidify acceptance of martyrdom within the wider Shi'a Lebanese community, Hezbollah offered additional incentives, including financial compensation and material support to the families of suicide operatives (again, providing a template that Palestinians would later emulate). Much of this assistance was channeled through the Martyr's Wives Association, a subsistence network that currently embraces some 2,500 families who receive a small salary every four weeks, as well as access to free health care and schooling for their children. This service has been estimated to cost $1,200 a month in 2004 dollars per family (Limbacher, 2004).

As previously noted, Hezbollah readily appreciated the positive "dividends" associated with martyr strikes and how such assaults could help equalize asymmetric military balances. One fundamental moral question the group confronted, however, concerned the specific nature of these attacks, which depended on the premeditated sacrifice by Muslims of their own lives. As Kramer notes (2002, p. 285), "these methods did not meet with universal approbation [within the organization] because of the strong Islamic prohibition against suicide."[34]

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[34] The Koran, for instance, states "And do not kill yourselves; verily God is compassionate to you" (Sura 4, verse 29). The generally accepted Islamic theological view of suicide is that it is one of the gravest sins that a Muslim can commit and that any who take their lives in this manner are doomed to suffer continual repetition of the specific action by which they killed themselves. For further details, see Rosenthal (1946), pp. 243 and 245, and, especially Ruqaiyah (1996–1997).

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To overcome this potentially nettlesome issue, Hezbollah's spiritual leader, Husayn Fadlallah, developed a dualistic moral argument for martyrdom that hinged on two opposite, but complementary, assertions. First was the aforementioned practical observation that Muslims had just cause to resort to extraordinary acts of terror, given the uneven balance of forces they were required to overcome on the battlefield. The second, more subtle point Fadlallah put forward was that suicide attacks were not that unusual after all and that operatives who perished giving their lives in this manner were no different from other soldiers who enter a conflict knowing that some will not return but confident that their sacrifice will advance the common cause (Kramer, 2002)[35]:

> "These initiatives," he insisted, "must be placed in their context." If the aim of such a combatant "is to have a political impact on an enemy whom it is impossible to fight by conventional means, then his sacrifice can be part of a jihad, a religious war. Such an undertaking differs little from that of a soldier who fights and knows that in the end he will be killed. The two situations lead to death; except that one fits in with the conventional procedures of war, and the other does not." Fadlallah, denying he had told anyone to "blow yourself up," did affirm that "the Muslims believe that you struggle by transforming yourself into a living bomb like you struggle with a gun in your hand. There is no difference between dying with a gun in your hand or exploding yourself."

Fadlallah thus legitimated suicide terrorism on a largely practical basis, concluding that those who engage in these attacks not only understand the consequences of their actions but are also confident that their deaths will be in the service of a living cause. While this moral argument was powerful, it was insufficient as an all-embracing justification for martyrdom, given the Koran's dictate that every

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[35] Kramer takes his quotations from two interviews with Fadlallah, the first in the Autumn 1985 issue of *Politique Internationale* and the second in the June–July 1985 issue of *Middle East Insight.*

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Muslim is obliged to preserve his or her life if possible. In an effort to address this point, Shi'a clerics supplemented Fadlallah's intellectual reasoning with spiritual overtures emphasizing that, so long as self-sacrifice was done for the good of the faith—rather than as a selfish expression of despair—it was not only legitimate but the fullest possible expression of the will of Allah (Kramer, 2002, p. 291). Such theological rationalization was periodically promulgated in the form of a religious edict—a *fatwa*—the most famous of which was Khomeini's declaration that he knew of no duty "more binding to the Muslim than the command to sacrifice life and property to defend and bolster Islam."[36]

That said, Fadlallah's notion that the legitimacy of martyrdom depended, ultimately, on its success continued to form the cornerstone on which Hezbollah's overall moral argument rested. Accordingly, when the positive cost-benefit ratio associated with suicide terrorism began to diminish (as it appeared to do after 1985, see above), the recourse to such attacks fell off, and the debate concerning their assumed morality increasingly ceased to figure in the running public commentary of the group's leaders (Kramer, 2002, pp. 292–293). It remains to be seen whether changing circumstances in the post–September 11 environment—particularly in the event that the global war on terror should come to target Iran (or Hezbollah itself) or that the Israeli-Palestinian situation continues to deteriorate without international intervention—will prompt the group's leadership to revisit the salience of this tactical determination and once again embrace suicide terrorism as a concerted strategy.

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[36] Ayatollah Khomeini, as quoted in Juergensmeyer (1993), p. 153.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Hamas

Palestinian terrorist organizations have arguably emerged as among the foremost exponents of suicide terrorism in the world today. They have perpetrated more suicide attacks than all other terrorist groups worldwide—including al-Qaeda—combined. For these groups, recruiting and deploying martyr bombers is a rational, calculated response to the asymmetric power balance that defines their critical relationship with the IDF. Just as significantly, through its deliberate manipulation and veneration, the tactic has been used and exploited to ensure a steady stream of recruits and to solidify support among the wider communities from which these militants originate. This is especially true of Hamas, which, arguably, has been at the forefront of Palestinian martyrdom for the past ten years.

Background of the Palestinian Problem and the Emergence of Hamas

The end of the First Arab-Israeli War in 1949 introduced two new factors into Middle Eastern politics: the Jewish state of Israel and the Palestinians exiled from it. Crowded into decrepit refugee camps in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt, the latter, stateless, community dreamed of the day when the Arab armies would arise to destroy the "Zionist enemy" and return them to their homes. The Arab states, however, already disheartened by the crushing defeat inflicted on them by inferior Israeli forces, had no desire to launch another war.

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Moreover, many Middle Eastern leaders soon realized that the Palestinians' exile was an issue that could be exploited for their own ends. Not only was the refugee crisis a useful means of both marshalling international opprobrium against Israel and generating support for greater Arab regional national unity, it also became a convenient way to deflect attention from domestic problems at home by directing popular discontent externally toward a common Jewish foe. Combined, these factors helped ensure that what the Palestinians had initially hoped would be a brief absence from their land evolved into something far more permanent.

In reaction to the growing reality that Arab states would not be coming to their assistance, clusters of desperate and disgruntled Palestinians started to form their own political movements and associations. It was from these groups that a fresh generation of ideologues emerged who were untainted by the humiliation of the 1948–1949 defeat and who had not been party to the broken promises of their Arab hosts. Taking on the mantle of the Palestinian cause, these new leaders argued that the refugees could rely on no one but themselves if they were ever to reclaim their homeland. Responding to this refrain, small bands of fedayeen (Arabic for "holy warriors") began to coalesce, many of which started carrying out sporadic cross-border hit-and-run attacks inside Israel. The tempo of these attacks progressively increased, thanks largely to backing from the Egyptian president, Gamal Abdul Nasser, who saw in the fedayeen a means of both harassing the nascent Jewish state and, simultaneously, advancing his claim to leadership of the Arab world. By 1953, Palestinian marauding had become both frequent enough and sufficiently lethal to warrant Israeli military reprisal. A deadly cycle of raid and retaliation followed, culminating in the 1956 Suez Crisis, which provided Israel with the necessary excuse to invade the Sinai Peninsula and eliminate the Egyptian bases supporting fedayeen operations.[1]

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[1] Among the standard texts describing the events of this period are two works by Benny Morris (1987, 1993). See also Khalidi (1971), Khouri (1977), Lorch (1976), and Pappe (1994).

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An almost identical tit-for-tat pattern set in motion the chain of events that resulted in the 1967 Six Day War nearly a decade later.[2] In many ways, it was this conflict that proved to be the vital watershed for the emergence of a unified and concerted Palestinian resistance movement. As one observer explains (MacIntyre, 1975, p. 23):

> The Six Day War destroyed Palestinian illusions about the Arab states' military potential in the liberation of Palestine. Defeated in battle, Arab states had few valid options for sustaining the conflict with Israel, save the military potential of the PLO and the emerged fedayeen groups.

Indeed, in the aftermath of Israel's crushing defeat of the combined armies of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, such terrorist groups as al-Fatah—founded by Yasir Arafat in 1957—appeared to be the only credible military force that the Arab world could now pit against Israel. For the first time, the Palestinians were in control of their destiny. True Arab unity, the fedayeen declared, could not be achieved until Palestine was liberated (Bell, 1971, p. 185). It was in acknowledgment of this shift that the Arab League, at its Khartoum Summit in September 1967, voted to extend both financial and military support to the fedayeen organizations.[3] The wealthy oil sheikhdoms of the Arabian Gulf contributed particularly large amounts of assistance to the Palestinians (Dobson, 1975, p. 26), establishing a pattern that continues to this day.[4]

Of all the fedayeen organizations, al-Fatah was the most successful in capitalizing on Arab League support, thanks mostly to the attention and prestige it reaped in the wake of the 1967 Six Day War.

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[2] The seminal work on the conflict is Oren (2002); see pp. 1–2.

[3] Among the best known, if not most significant, of these groups were al-Fatah; the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, established in 1967; the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine–General Command, established in 1967; along with at least ten other organizations. (See Central Intelligence Agency, 1990.)

[4] See, for example, Levitt (2003) or Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (undated), Appendix E.

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This preeminence, combined with the financial and materiel backing it afforded, attracted growing numbers of recruits to the group's ranks, soon transforming the movement into the largest of the Palestinian terrorist groups. By the end of 1968, Arafat calculated that he could lever al-Fatah's growth and strength to gain control over the entire Palestinian nationalist movement (Quandt, 1973, p. 58). This reasoning proved correct; at the fifth session of the Palestine National Congress, held in Cairo in February 1969, he was elected chairman of the executive committee of the PLO. A joint PLO-Fatah military command was immediately instituted, formalizing the convergence of the two groups and consolidating Arafat's power (Cooley, 1973, p. 103). For the next 18 years, the PLO was the indisputable, preeminent political force in both the Palestinian armed struggle and its politics.

The situation began to change in the late 1980s, however. Exiled to Tunisia after being evicted from Lebanon by Israel in 1982 (see Chapter Two), the PLO had not only arguably begun to languish but also to grow increasingly distant from its constituents on the West Bank and, especially, the Gaza Strip. This became evident on December 8, 1987, when an otherwise unremarkable collision involving an Israeli truck and some other vehicles resulted in the deaths of several Palestinian workers. Without any warning, the accident triggered an explosion of Palestinian rioting. The Israelis and PLO initially dismissed the disorders as an ephemeral outburst of frustration. However, the civil disturbance and unrest not only continued but spread, and it was soon evident that an embryonic uprising, independent of the PLO, had been irrevocably set in motion. The resulting Intifada (Arabic for *uprising*, but translating literally as *shaking off*) was not even a week old when, on December 14, the Muslim Brotherhood distributed a pamphlet calling for continued resistance (Mishal and Aharoni, 1994, p. xiii; Abu-Amr, 1993, p. 10;

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Bennis, 1990, p. 27; and Theodoulu, 1995).[5] This leaflet is now regarded as marking the emergence of a new Palestinian resistance organization—the Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya [Islamic Resistance Movement], known best by its Arabic acronym, Hamas.[6]

The Environmental and Tactical Context for Hamas's Adoption of Suicide Terrorism

From its inception in 1987, Hamas faced the problem of devising a means and a message with which to carve out a distinctive niche in an already crowded field of militant groups. This challenge was formidable. As a latecomer to an already well-established Palestinian liberation movement with deep popular roots, Hamas had to distinguish itself both from competing organizations that in some cases had been fighting for decades and from an equally long-standing and powerful representative body—the PLO. That today Hamas can reportedly claim the support of upwards of 70 percent of Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza is testament to the group's success not only in overcoming these disadvantages but in its ability over a relatively short span of time to become a major force in Palestinian politics.[7] While Hamas's espousal of an expansionist and explicitly religious agenda—the liberation of all of Palestine and the creation of an Islamic state incorporating the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and all of Israel—was important in distancing it from the secular, mainstream PLO (and other affiliated nationalist entities), it was the group's

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[5] The Muslim Brotherhood is an "ultra-conservative religious and political association" with branches throughout the Middle East that was founded in Egypt in 1929 by Hassan al-Banna. Its goal is to "impose the laws of Islam upon the social, political and constitutional life of the Muslim nations." See Levine and Shimoni (1972), pp. 262–263.

[6] The word *hamas* in Arabic also means *zeal.*

[7] The Gaza percentage is likely to be even higher, given the militancy and more entrenched religious orientation of its Palestinian population.

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eventual adoption of suicide terrorism as a signature mode of attack that was most salient to this process (Mishal and Sela, 2000, p. 50).[8]

Initially, Hamas lacked the ability to carry out concerted terrorist attacks, largely because the organization was bereft of a viable military branch. Indeed, the early years of the Intifada were characterized more by stone throwing from rioting Palestinian youths than any sustained campaign of outright violence (Mishal and Sela, 2000, p. 15).[9] Compounding the situation were harsh and effective Israeli countermeasures directed against Hamas activists, which were instrumental in denuding their ability to develop a sophisticated and coherent militant strategy (Mishal and Sela, 2000, p. 64). This all changed, however, with the establishment in 1991 of the so-called battalions of Izz al-Din al-Qassam—Hamas's first bona fide, separate armed wing.[10] While the new unit began modestly enough, by systematically executing Palestinian collaborators in the Gaza Strip, it had, by the following year, already graduated to assassinating Israeli settlers and

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[8] To more clearly define its agenda and delineate itself from mainstream Palestinian politics, Hamas also adopted the motto of "not [ceding] one inch" of land. One leaflet in particular, distributed within the Intifada's first year, captures this ineluctable platform. Mishal and Aharoni (1994), p. 31, quotes this pamphlet, entitled "Islamic Palestine from the [Mediterranean] Sea to the [Jordan] River," as declaring that

> The Muslims have had a full—not partial right to Palestine for generations, in the past, present and future. . . . No Palestinian generation has the right to concede the land, steeped in martyr's blood. . . . You must continue the uprising and stand up against the usurpers wherever they may be, until the complete liberation of every grain of the soil of . . . . Palestine, all Palestine, with God's help."

[9] Reflecting this situation, Hamas was able to perpetrate only ten attacks during its first year of existence.

[10] The unit is named after a Syrian-born sheikh who became an iconic figure of the history of the Palestinian nationalist resistance movement. During the 1920s and 1930s, Sheikh al-Qassam was the spiritual head of a collection of villages in the area around Haifa populated mostly by landless peasants, who had been displaced by the Zionists. A militant nationalist and devout Muslim, al-Qassam organized a Palestinian guerrilla unit that, starting in 1931, began to raid Jewish settlements in the Jezreel Valley. In a clash with British police in November 1935, al-Qassam was killed. Nonetheless, his loss did not deter his followers, who continued fighting and thus set the stage for the countrywide revolt against British rule, known as the Arab Rebellion, which erupted the following year and continued until 1939. (See Porath, 1977, pp. 132–139; see also Abu-Amr, 1993, p. 6; Stork, 2002, fn 158, p. 65.)

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using car bombs. Hamas's newfound successes spawned both imitation and competition from other Palestinian militants, especially those who shared the group's religious orientation. PIJ, in particular, was driven to strike out in new directions, forging ties with Hezbollah and participating in attacks on IDF forces in south Lebanon (Mishal and Sela, 2000, p. 65).

The climax to this phase of the Intifada came between October and December 1992, when a series of terrorist attacks claimed the lives of five IDF soldiers and a member of the Border Police. The latter incident proved to be the last straw for Israeli Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin, who ordered the deportation of 415 Islamic Palestinian activists (the vast majority of whom belonged to Hamas, with about 50 belonging to PIJ) to Lebanon (Stork, 2002, p. 73). In retrospect these expulsions proved to be entirely counterproductive—if not a grave miscalculation—generating at least three negative outcomes. First, deposited in the middle of rough country in south Lebanon in the middle of winter, the deportees quickly became a cause célèbre, attracting both international media attention and worldwide pity (Jarbawi and Heacock, 1993, p. 32; see also Mishal and Sela, 2000, pp. 96–97). More specifically, Hamas was able to bear the fruits of its leaders' suffering—attaining a level of sympathy and legitimacy both with Palestinians and foreigners that it might not otherwise have acquired.[11]

Second, and more significantly, during the nearly 10 months the members of Hamas were in Lebanon, they were able to establish close ties to Hezbollah, which, as Chapter Two notes, was the group that effectively pioneered suicide bombing in the Middle East in the 1980s. The resulting tactical influence on the group was profound. Indeed, according to Mishal and Sela, the extended exile in south Lebanon provided Hamas militants a golden opportunity to learn

[11] The exiles included doctors, clerics, teachers, engineers, judges, and professors. By focusing on these individuals, Hamas was able to further facilitate its claim that it was not a terrorist organization but the legitimate representative of a true Palestinian community. (See Abu-Amr, 1993, p. 26, and Ahmad, 1994, p. 77.)

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about Hezbollah's experience in fighting the Israelis and SLA, particularly in terms of suicide tactics and how to construct car bombs. Hamas was unequivocal that its first martyr operation, carried out shortly after the deportees returned to the Occupied Territories, was directly related to this exposure (see Mishal and Sela, 2000, pp. 65–66).

Third, far from causing the group to collapse (as Israel hoped it would), the expulsions created a leadership vacuum that was progressively filled by more violently inclined Palestinian youths. This new generation, which was concerned less with the Islamization of Palestinian society than with promoting the military dimension of Hamas's struggle, pushed an even harder line of no compromise, no surrender with Israel, focusing its attention on increasing the tempo of attacks in the Occupied Territories (Jarbawi and Heacock, 2003 p. 40). The net result was a major expansion of influence for the al-Qassam wing and the attendant priority accorded to the armed dimension of the anti-Jewish struggle (Ya'ari, 1993, p. 25).

Hamas was now well positioned to redouble its military campaign against Israel and to consolidate its gains in popular support over the PLO and other rivals. Both imperatives acquired new urgency in the fall of 1993 with the conclusion of the Oslo Accords and the commencement of formal negotiations between Arafat and Rabin. The entire process was anathema to Hamas. Not only did the talks entail de facto recognition of Israel and the cessation of Palestinian-Israeli fighting, but the parameters of the so-called Declaration of Principles guiding the discussions called for the eventual implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, which would lead to *formal* Palestinian recognition of Israel's right to exist.[12]

In response, Hamas decided to challenge both the Declaration of Principles framework and the PLO's authority (Abu-Amr, 1993, p.

[12] The two Security Council resolutions in essence call for Israel to return to the boundaries that existed before the 1967 Six Day War and therefore for Israelis to withdraw from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in return for the unqualified recognition by both Israel and Palestinians of one another's legitimate right to statehood (Michels, 1994, p. 37).

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13). Because its greatest concern was the deleterious effect that any peace process would have on the continuation of the jihad proclaimed against Israel (Mishal and Sela, 2000, p. 67), Hamas arguably had no option but to reemphasize armed struggle. The resultant escalation of military operations commenced within a month of the Oslo Accords' signing. Three major attacks killed 26 Israelis and wounded many others. The message could not have been clearer: There would be no peace and security "unless and until Hamas is recognized and its demands are met" (Juergensmeyer, 1996, p. 7; Abu-Amr, 1993, p. 13). Despite the surge in violence, the movement continued to represent no more than a nuisance to Israel and the PLO. At this critical juncture, the challenge for Hamas's leaders was to institute a means of attack sufficiently dramatic—and, indeed, extraordinary—that would be capable of altering the strategic balance in Palestine and Israel. The solution they embraced was suicide bombing (see Laqueur, 1999, p. 139, and Laqueur, 2003, p. 107).

Tactical and Strategic Considerations Surrounding Hamas's Use of Suicide Bombing Between 1994 and 2000

On April 6, 1994, Hamas carried out the first suicide bombing attack to target Israeli civilians. The incident, which resulted in eight fatalities and 34 injuries, occurred in the northern Israeli city of Afula and had two main objectives: (1) to avenge the (February 25) deaths of the 29 Palestinian worshippers that Dr. Baruch Goldstein had killed at the Hebron religious shrine known to Jews as the Cave of the Patriarchs and to the Muslims as the Ibrahim Mosque and (2) to derail the talks then in progress between Israel and the PLO on implementing the Oslo Accords (Stork, 2002, fn 158, p. 66). A series of suicide bombings followed, including attacks in Hadera in April, at the Dizengoff Center in Tel Aviv in October, and at Nezarim Junction in November; collectively these strikes killed 31 ("Record of Suicide Attacks," 1996).

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In all these incidents, Hezbollah's example, influence, and training were evident (Ganor, undated, p. 136; Theodoulu, 1995). Indeed, according to Mishal and Sela (2000, p. 66), the suicide operations were textbook Hezbollah, with Hamas even adopting the same procedure of first finding a candidate for the attack, providing the necessary training and psychological preparation, publishing his final farewell letter, and videotaping the bomber before the initiation of his mission. According to the late Ehud Sprinzak (2000, p. 4), who continues to be recognized as one of the most definitive authorities on Palestinian suicide terrorism, the process of visually displaying usually joyous martyrs, combined with the resulting carnage they have wrought, were decisive in eroding Israel's collective confidence in the peace process and augmenting the influence and popularity of extremist Hamas clerics who opposed any negotiations with the Jewish state.[13]

The unleashing of Hamas suicide strikes brought serious consequences in terms of Israeli defensive measures. One of the immediate answers was the targeted assassination of terrorist leaders, a policy that continues to be used today. An early casualty in this directed response was Yahya Ayyash, a master bomb maker known as the "Engineer," who was killed by Israeli agents in January 1996.[14] Ayyash is believed to have first proposed that Hamas resort to martyr operations and, prior to his death, had been held personally responsible for the deaths of 130 Israelis and the wounding of nearly 500 others (Colvin and Goldberg, 1996).[15] Rather than ending the attacks, however, his

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[13] Hamas's inauguration and escalation of suicide terrorism sharpened its rivalry with the numerically and generally less consequential PIJ, which was in turn driven to adopt the tactic. PIJ's first foray into martyrdom occurred on January 22, 1995, when PIJ bombers killed 20 Israeli soldiers hitchhiking at the Beit Lid roadside junction near Netanya.

[14] The nickname was coined by no less a personage than the Israeli Prime Minister, Itzhak Rabin. The agents assassinated Ayyash by detonating a small bomb that was concealed in his mobile telephone. For the most complete, though journalistic, account of Ayyash and of Israel's hunt for him, see Katz (1999). See also Colvin and Goldberg (1996).

[15] According to a Hamas activist, in the early 1990s, Ayyash sent a letter to the Hamas leadership which, according to Hassan (2001) p. 38, argued, "We paid a high price when we

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assassination triggered the most dramatic escalation to date, with five suicide bombings taking place in two weeks. The collective toll from this spate of violence was 59, nearly half what had been amassed to date since the first assault in Afula two years previously ("Record of Suicide Attacks," 1996).

Politically, Hamas's violent campaign of retribution is widely credited with having affected the outcome of Israel's national elections in May that year and bringing to power the right-wing Likud coalition government of Benjamin Netanyahu. Indeed, this appears to have been precisely the group's strategy: The new prime minister's hard-line stance on Palestinian negotiations not only helped to polarize Israeli society against accommodation with the PLO but also provided yet another blow to a peace process that the Islamists so badly wanted destroyed (see Schmemann, 1995). On a military level, the heightened level of attacks, coming despite the loss of a key leader, provided unwelcome and disquieting evidence of Hamas's newfound strategic depth and organizational resiliency. From a purely tactical perspective, the group was, by 1996, generally regarded as the strongest of the Palestinian resistance organizations the IDF was confronting (see Shahak, 1996, p. 17; "Terror Isn't Alone," 1996).[16]

Thereafter, the general pace of Palestinian terrorism and suicide slackened, with only two brief spasms of attacks between August and September 1996 (two bombings) and March and September 1997 (three bombings) (Mishal and Sela, 2000, p. 78). Hamas's quiescence from this time until the collapse of the Oslo Accords that followed the abortive Camp David meetings in the summer of 2000 was a reflection of two main factors. First, many of the movement's hard-line activists and leading commanders (for example, Muhammad

used only slingshots and stones. We need to exert more pressure, make the cost of the occupation that much more expensive in human lives, that much more unbearable."

[16] Immediately following the wave of bombings, the head of Israeli military intelligence, Brigadier General Ya'acov Amidor, was forced to concede that "Hamas is difficult to get rid of. You can trim its branches, but you can't pull out its roots."

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Daif[17]) had been apprehended and duly imprisoned by the variegated security and intelligence forces of the National Palestine Authority (PA),[18] when an unprecedented level of cooperation with their Israeli counterparts was at its height (Sprinzak, 2000 p. 4).

Second, and more relevant for the purposes of this analysis, Hamas had itself initiated a policy of "controlled violence" (Mishal and Sela, 2000, p. 50). In adopting this tactic, the movement clearly showed that its use of suicide terrorism was far from being irrational and mindless (which was the common picture painted in the media) but was, in fact, a reasoned and highly calculated instrument of war. Indeed, in an interview with the East Jerusalem daily, *Al-Quds*, one of Hamas's senior leaders in Gaza, Mahmud al-Zahar, went to great lengths to elucidate that martyrdom was not an end in itself but a carefully calibrated means to an end. In particular, he stressed that military operations were neither independent of nor superior to the group's wider framework of political aims and objectives:

> We must calculate the benefit and cost of continued armed operations. If we can fulfill our goals without violence, we will do so. Violence is a means, not a goal. Hamas's decision to adopt self-restraint does not contradict our aims, including the establishment of an Islamic state instead of Israel . . . . We will never recognize Israel, but it is possible that a truce [*muhadana*] could prevail between us for days, months, or years.[19]

That self-restraint ended on October 30, 2000, when a Hamas suicide bomber killed 15 people in Jerusalem. The attack, which was triggered by the visit of Ariel Sharon (then candidate for prime minis-

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[17] Before his arrest, Daif had acted as the nominal head of the al-Qassam brigades and was one of the ten most wanted militants in Israel and the Occupied Territories.

[18] The PA was created as part of the Declaration of Principles peace process in 1994; it serves as a de facto government for Gaza and scattered Palestinian enclaves in the West Bank.

[19] From *Al-Quds* (East Jerusalem), October 12, 1995, as translated in Mishal and Sela (2000), p. 71.

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ter) to Jerusalem's Temple Mount,[20] sparked what has since come to be known as the "al-Aqsa Intifada."[21] One of the main features of this most-recent phase of the conflict—particularly its first two years—has been the appreciably greater number of martyrdom operations, which, according to Israel's Shin Bet, have accounted for 70 percent of all suicide attacks perpetrated over the last ten years.[22]

Hamas's Use of Suicide Terrorism During the Al-Aqsa Intifada: 2000 to 2002

As noted above, Hamas's most-intensive use of suicide tactics occurred during the first two years of the al-Aqsa Intifada. There are four basic explanations for this dramatic upsurge of violence:

1. The group internally calculated that this weapon was able to deliver results not possible with other tactics.
2. Hamas was able to tap a self-sustaining pool of potential suicide bombers as a result of its successful portrayal of martyrdom as a positive social act.
3. The group was in competition with other Palestinian organizations over which group could mobilize the most, and most-effective, "human bombs."
4. The process of spiritual justification had afforded legitimacy to suicide terrorism.

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[20] Temple Mount, also known as al-Haram al-Sharif, is Islam's third holiest shrine.

[21] Also referred to as the Second Intifada.

[22] Note that, while the figures publicly released by Israel's General Security Service (the *Sherut Ha-Bitachon Ha-Klali*, also known as the *Shabak* or *Shin Bet*), are not identical, they have the same pattern. According to Shin Bet's figures, 61 suicide bombings occurred between 1993 and September 2000 and 145 between October 2000 and September 2002 (see Harel, 2002).

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Suicide Terrorism as an Instrument of War

From the start of the al-Aqsa Intifada, the leaders of Hamas had apparently already reached the conclusion that suicide terrorism could achieve results against Israel that other tactics could not. In this respect, the Hezbollah model again loomed large. Only four months earlier, the IDF had withdrawn from south Lebanon, an act that Palestinians interpreted as directly stemming from the prosecution of unrelenting suicide attacks (Pape, 2003, p. 355).[23] Moreover, Hamas appeared to reason that suicide attacks were the next logical step in the armed campaign of resistance against the Jewish state. As the movement's Khaled Meshal told the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in 2000:

> Like the intifada in 1987, the current intifada has taught us that we should move forward normally from popular confrontation to the rifle to suicide operations. This is the normal development. . . . We always have the Lebanese experiment before our eyes. It was a great model of which we are proud.[24]

Hamas's decision to rely on suicide bombings as its principal instrument of war during the al-Aqsa Intifada was, thus, clearly calculated. The group's logic and reasoning in this regard were frequently and openly expressed. Commenting on the potential tactical viability of martyrdom, for instance, one leading member of the al-Qassam Brigades (Hassan, 2001, p. 38) said that "We do not have tanks or rockets, but we have something superior—our exploding Islamic human bombs. In place of a nuclear arsenal, we are proud of our arsenal of believers." To be sure, the cost-benefit trade-off of using this weapon is impressive, yielding a substantial return for the

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[23] For assessments of Hezbollah's own portrayal of the reasons behind the IDF redeployment, see Tsfati and Weimann (2002), pp. 315–316; "Deadly Image Could Give Hezbollah the Edge" (2000); "Good Women Help Bring War's End" (2000); and Agence France-Presse (2000).

[24] BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, July 23, 2000, as recorded in Pape (2003), p. 355.

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group concerned. Indeed, while the typical cost of a Hamas suicide operation is estimated to be only $150 (Hassan, 2001, p. 38), attacks of this sort generally inflict six times the deaths and roughly 26 times the casualties of other acts of terrorism.[25]

These "payoffs" have played an important role in validating Hamas's internal belief that it is only by resorting to such wantonly lethal tactics that the group will ever be able to balance the military equation vis-à-vis the numerically and technologically superior IDF (reflecting the same sort of rational calculus that had been manifest with Hezbollah). Put another way, Hamas's strategists came to regard suicide terrorism as not only the most effective way to wage asymmetric war but, conceivably, the only possible means of doing so. As reported in Hassan (2001, p. 39), one Palestinian militant graphically expressed this logic by pointedly declaring: "If our wives and children are not safe from Israeli tanks and rockets, theirs will not be safe from our human bombs."[26]

Part and parcel of these justifications are two ancillary, but critical, arguments. The first is a derivation of the effectiveness point discussed above, in which suicide terrorism is heralded as the only convincing means of communicating to the Jewish state the implacable determination of the Palestinian people. The second, related, point pertains to Hamas's belief that, with martyr bombings, they have finally discovered Israel's Achilles' heel. Drawing again on the Hezbollah model, Meshal (as quoted in Hassan, 2001), for instance, claims that

> The Zionist enemy . . . only understands the language of Jihad, resistance and martyrdom, that was the language that led to its blatant defeat in South Lebanon and it will be the language that will defeat it on the land of Palestine.

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[25] Data from the RAND Terrorism Incident Database.

[26] PIJ has offered a similar justification for the use of suicide terrorism (Sprinzak, 2000).

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The Palestinians thus embrace suicide terrorism as a psychological weapon designed to induce paralysis in their hated opponent. As the late spiritual leader of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin,[27] once exhorted: "The Israelis . . . will fall to their knees . . . . You can sense the fear in Israel already; they are worried about where and when the next attacks will come. Ultimately, Hamas will win."[28]

This is what is known in the Middle East as the "spiderweb" theory. It is based on the primary conclusion Hezbollah drew from IDF's withdrawal from south Lebanon, which we described earlier and that the Palestinians now also embrace. Nasrallah reportedly coined the phrase, describing Israel as still being a formidable military power but having a civil society that had become materialistic, lazy, self-satisfied, and soft. According to this rationale, as IDF Chief of Staff Moshe "Boogie" Ya'alon, explained to the Israeli public in an interview published in *Ha'Aretz* in August 2002 (Shavit, 2002, p. 3),

> The Israeli army is strong, Israel has technological superiority and is said to have strategic capabilities, but its citizens are unwilling any longer to sacrifice lives in order to defend their national interests and national goals. Therefore, Israel is a spider-web society: it looks strong from the outside, but touch it and it will fall apart.

Inverted Sense of Normality and Societal Imprimatur

Throughout the al-Aqsa Intifada, Hamas has sought to be and has been remarkably successful in bestowing a positive social imprimatur on suicide operations by fostering an inverted sense of normality among the Palestinian communities from which it enlists bombers and derives their support and sustenance. This process, which has involved endowing martyrdom with thoroughly constructive conno-

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[27] Yassin was assassinated by the IDF in March 2004. For an analysis of the events and implications surrounding the killing, see Blanche (2004c), pp. 18–20.

[28] As quoted in Wazis (2001).

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tations, has been critical in ensuring a self-sustaining pool of recruits who are ready and willing to actively sacrifice their lives in the name of the anti-Israeli cause. Several methods of inducement and communication have been integral to this deliberate recalibration of social values.

Sermons in mosques have been a highly important and major source of encouragement. One particularly noteworthy case was an oration delivered by a prominent Palestinian cleric, Sheikh Ibrahim Madhi, on April 12, 2002, which was also broadcast live on Palestinian television. During the address, Madhi reportedly beseeched his congregation to undertake suicide operations, declaring that anyone who fails to attain this "status" "should wake in the middle of the night and say: 'My God, why have you deprived me of martyrdom for your sake? For the martyr lives next to Allah.'" The sheikh then apparently called on Allah to "accept our martyrs in the highest heavens . . . show the Jews a black day . . . annihilate the Jews and their supporters . . . [and] raise the flag of Jihad across the land . . . " (Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 2002).

Television, as we have seen, has also been used to air promotional spots extolling the virtues of martyrdom and actively encouraging Palestinian youth to volunteer for suicide attacks. One recent segment broadcast during the summer of 2003 depicted the image of a young Palestinian couple out for a walk when Israeli troops suddenly open fire, shooting the woman in the back and killing her. After the boyfriend is subsequently shot by the IDF, he is shown ascending to heaven where he is welcomed by his girlfriend, who is seen dancing with dozens of other females, portraying the 72 virgins—the promised "Maidens of Paradise"—reputedly awaiting the male martyr in heaven. The clip is thus cleverly designed to appeal to male and female would-be suicide bombers alike.[29] As one Islamic scholar explained (Marcus, 2003):

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[29] Foreign Broadcast Information Service (2003a), p. 8.

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> When the Shahid [martyr] meets his Maker, all his sins are forgiven from the first gush of blood. He is exempted from the "torments of the grave" (Judgment); he sees his place in paradise, he is shielded from the great shock, and marries Dark Eyed Virgins. He is a heavenly advocate for 70 members of his family, on his head is placed a crown of honor, one stone of which, is worth more than all there is in this world.

Two days before Hamas's August 18, 2003 suicide bombing of a bus in Jerusalem, a music video version of this same "advert" aired on the PA's television network.

This quote reflects a third type of incentive that is commonly used to motivate potential suicide terrorists: the guarantee of spiritual and material rewards. For the human operative, there is the promise of veneration among the Palestinian community—reinforced by images of martyrs emblazoned on murals, wall posters, calendars, key chains, postcards, and pennants—as well as access to an afterlife replete with pleasures routinely forbidden on earth, including sex and alcohol (discussed in more detail below).[30] For the parents and relations of these "self-destructive recruits," there is assurance of their own automatic right to heaven (again discussed in more detail below) in addition to financial support (during the al-Aqsa Intifada, Hamas is believed to have paid death benefits ranging from $10,000 to $25,000 to families of suicide bombers) and such other benefits as better living accommodations and various consumer goods (Associated Press, 2002).[31]

Finally, videos of martyrs before they undertake their operations are routinely made and circulated to attract further recruits, not least

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[30] Heaven is described as a glorious place with "rivers of milk and wine . . . lakes of honey, and the services of 72 virgins," where all martyrs will see the face of Allah (see "Wedded to Death," 1996, and "Palestinian 'Was Duped,'" 1997).

[31] Until 2001, Hamas paid a death benefit of $3,000 to 5,000, which at the time was more than double the financial compensation paid to families of terrorists killed in other types of (nonsuicidal) terrorist attacks. The increase to $25,000 reputedly occurred courtesy of Saddam Hussein's largesse.

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by calling attention to the group and highlighting the invincibility of its fighters and the inevitability of its cause.[32] Through this type of visual portrayal, Hamas has effectively ensured that suicide bombers are neither shunned nor dismissed as psychologically imbalanced but lauded as committed, brave, and selfless Palestinian patriots (Lelyveld, 2001, p. 51). Reactions in Gaza to news of a successful martyr strike underscore just how effective the group has been in this regard. According to one report, candy is handed out on the streets, and women respond with traditional shrieks of joy. As Sadl abu Hein, a psychology lecturer from the area, sadly sums up (Associated Press, 2002): "Martyrdom has become an ambition for our children."[33]

Rivalry and Competition Between Terrorist Groups

The rivalries between the various Palestinian terrorists organizations have long spawned intense competition among the groups, both politically and tactically. However, a new, literally explosive element was introduced into this equation in November 2001 with Fatah's formation of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade—a specialist unit dedicated to suicide terrorism.[34] Both external and internal considerations likely dictated this decision, most of which revolved around the need to stem the erosion of morale among the PLO fighters who were witnessing the steady eclipse of their organization's power and influence.[35] First was the hope that suicide attacks would not only rein-

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[32] See, for instance, the series of Hamas videos on martyrdom collected and distributed by the IntelCenter (various dates).

[33] According to opinion polls taken in 2002, more than 70 percent of Palestinians support the use of suicide attacks against Israel (see Lelyveld, 2001, p. 50; Lelyveld cites a 78-percent approval rating).

[34] The al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade also undertakes operations for the plethora of militias—known as the Tanzim—that act under the auspices of Fatah.

[35] Note that, after the 1993 Oslo Accords, the PLO was renamed and is now the Palestinian Authority.

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vigorate the mainstream Palestinian opposition but also advance its aims and strengthen its stature relative to Hamas and PIJ. Second was the anticipated belief that, by resorting to martyrdom, the PLO would experience the same surge in recruits that had attended its Islamist-oriented rivals (see Hassan, 2001, p. 39; see also Drozdiak, 1997, and MacFarquhar, 1996). Finally, there was the general acceptance that the sustained use of human bombs was an effective and proven means of projecting power and accruing prestige. Combined, these considerations appear to have persuaded the PLO that it could not afford *not* to have its own martyr wing, a determination that was given concrete expression in November 2001 when al-Fatah signaled its entry into the realm of suicide terrorism by blowing up a bus near Hadera (Luft, 2002b, pp. 4–5).[36]

Israel's seizure two months later of the *Karine-A*, a cargo ship transporting some 50 tons of arms and explosives to the PLO,[37] doubtless accelerated the frequency of al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades attacks. It can be argued that al-Fatah, deprived of the means of waging a more-conventional guerrilla campaign (perhaps of its own choosing) and now in even greater danger of being eclipsed by Hamas, reasoned that it had no alternative but to step up the tempo of martyr strikes. Indeed, it may not be entirely coincidental that the first female suicide bomber appeared within weeks of the loss of the *Karine-A* shipment. The perpetrator, subsequently identified as Wafa Idris (a 28-year-old divorcee who worked as a medical secretary for the Palestinian Red Crescent), was recruited and deployed on an al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade suicide-bombing mission to Jerusalem that left one elderly man dead and 114 others wounded.[38] According to

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[36] The attack was actually a joint operation with PIJ, involving two terrorists from each group, one of whom was a member of the PA police force, based in Jericho.

[37] The *Karine-A* was intercepted in the Red Sea on January 3, 2002, by Israeli commandos and the Israeli Navy while en route from Iran to Gaza. (See Luft, 2002a, pp. 1–2; Makovsky, 2002, pp. 1–2; Satloff, 2002, pp. 1–2; and "Caught Red-Handed," 2002, p. 1.)

[38] Among the injured was a Woodmere, Long Island, resident named Mark Sokolow, who on September 11 had escaped unharmed from the second tower of the World Trade Center,

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retired IDF colonel Gal Luft, al-Fatah has since actively moved to encourage the participation of women in martyrdom operations, capitalizing on the general reluctance of its Islamist rivals to institute such attacks (see Luft, 2002b, p. 5).

Through the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, al-Fatah and the PA thus directly challenged the monopoly over suicide attacks that Hamas and, to a lesser extent, PIJ had hitherto enjoyed, triggering a macabre "human arms race" based on the recruitment and deployment of more and better trained martyr bombers. The succession of terrorist incidents that convulsed Israel during the first part of 2002 was likely fuelled by this competition. Indeed by any metric, the year was "astonishing" in terms of suicide bombings, with no less than five successful suicide strikes in any given month—nearly double the rate during the first 15 months of the al-Aqsa Intifada (which itself is more than ten times the monthly average since 1993).[39]

Spiritual-Political Justification of Palestinian-Inspired Suicide Bombers

A final factor that played a critical role in augmenting both the scale and tempo of Hamas martyr attacks during the al-Aqsa Intifada was the legitimization the practice has received from Islamist clerics. The Koran expressly forbids suicide, which, as noted in Chapter Three, is

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only to find himself enmeshed in another life-threatening terrorist incident, this time in Jerusalem.

[39] The distribution of groups claiming credit for these attacks is revealing in that it may signal Fatah's future ascendancy to the top of the "martyrdom totem pole." Of the 59 incidents recorded that year, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade led with 25 (42 percent), followed by Hamas with 16 (27 percent), and PIJ with 12 (2 percent). Significantly, this intergroup competition was so febrile that, in just one year, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades staged nearly two-thirds the number of suicide attacks that Hamas had perpetrated during the previous three years combined. (Figures derived from the Database of Terrorism Attacks Against Israel, 1948–Present, maintained by the National Security Studies Center.)

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regarded as one of the greatest sins in the Muslim faith.[40] To overcome this problem, Hamas religious spokesmen have devised a semantic division that differentiates suicide—the taking of one's own life—from martyrdom—in which the perpetrator's death is a requirement for the attack's success (a ploy that Hezbollah and al-Qaeda similarly use). Drawing on this self-defined distinction, clerics have been able to cast the use of human bombs as the ultimate expression of selflessness and altruism, an ideal that is undertaken for the sake of the community and/or God (Sarraj, 1997).[41]

This religious legitimization has helped to negate arguments that the use of suicide terrorism is "anti-Islamic" and has allowed Hamas (and other Palestinian groups) to venerate perpetrators of these attacks as *shaheed batal* [martyr heroes] (Hassan, 2001, p. 38) or *istishahadi* [he who martyrs himself] (Rabbani, 2001). As Ruqaiyah (1996–1997) notes, in the context of *istishahadi*, evidence from the Koran supports the notion that the deliberate taking of one's life is legitimate so long as it is undertaken in accordance with the following four essential motivations: (1) seeking martyrdom, (2) hurting the enemy, (3) encouraging Muslims, and (4) weakening the spirit of the enemy.

Prominent Muslim clerics have made similar pronouncements and, in some instances, promulgated them as fatwas.[42] In the specific

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[40] See the Koran, for example," And do not kill yourselves; verily God is compassionate unto you" (Sura 4, Verse 29). See also, especially the treatise by Br. Abu Ruqaiyah on the legitimacy of "martyrdom operations," (Ruqaiyah, 1996–1997).

[41] Dr. Reuven Paz, one of Israel's leading authorities on Islamic terrorism has advanced the same argument (see Paz, 2001, pp. 87–88).

[42] According to journalist Joyce M. Davis, other leading Islamic authorities, such as Mohammed Sayed Tantawi of al-Azhar University in Cairo and Sheikh Hamed al-Midawi, a cleric at Jerusalem's al-Aqsa mosque and the chairman of the (Muslim) Legal Appeals Court in that city, "believe Islamic teachings clearly support suicide bombings, but only against Israeli military targets. Suicide bombings are merely a form of jihad, one of the pillars of Islam, these jurists say. And they say Palestinian suicide bombers are helping to defend their land from Israeli aggression" (see Davis, 2003, p. 113).

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context of Palestine, the late Sheikh Yassin reportedly justified suicide terrorism by citing the Koran (Sura 2, Verses 190–191):

> Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you. . . . And slay them wherever ye find them and drive them out of the places when they drove you out, for persecution is worse than slaughter.[43]

To give added force to these pronouncements, Hamas theologians preach that martyrs will feel no pain in the prosecution of their act and, more importantly, will earn the eternal gratitude of Allah in the afterlife. As noted above, the notion of attaining redemption in Heaven has proven to be a pivotal inducement for motivating would-be suicide operatives and is a tactic that Hamas has frequently exploited in prosecuting its campaign against Israel. As early as 1994, the group's ideologues were affirming that suicide terrorism is not only necessary, given the asymmetric nature of the Palestinian-IDF military balance, but was also desirable because it guaranteed the martyr's right to enter Heaven and thus liberate him or herself from all the pain and suffering of this world (see Yisra'eli, 1994, p. 3). Perhaps not surprisingly, given these assurances, witnesses and survivors have often recounted how suicide bombers were smiling just before blowing themselves and their victims up.[44]

Apart from their own salvation, martyrs are additionally told that they will be able to directly intercede with God and arrange for 70 family members to enter heaven (Davis, 2003, p. 154). Indeed, one possible reason some parents and other relatives of suicide bombers applaud and praise the violent deaths of their progeny or relations may be because of their own impending salvation. American journal-

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[43] As quoted in Davis (2003), p. 113. The U.S.-based Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith has compiled a list of "Arab Leaders [Who] Glorify Suicide Terrorism" along with other, similarly effusive, panegyrics to the exalted *istishahadi* (see Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 2002).

[44] This is known as the *bassamat al-Farah*—"smile of joy"—a tradition of the Shi'a denoting the joy of martyrdom that appears to be prevalent among Sunni terrorists as well.

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ist Barbara Victor, in her 2003 book on female Palestinian suicide bombers, recounts a conversation she had in January 2003 with Sheikh 'Abd-Salan abu Shukheudem, the chief mufti of the PA police force (a position akin to the official chaplain of an American police force). Shukheudem detailed for Victor the seven rewards according to Islamic tradition that are bestowed on the martyr for his act of self-sacrifice (discussed above).

In point of fact, the Koran makes no such specific promises, either for suicide bombers or their families. These ethereal promises are nonetheless repeated by Muslim clerics, readily accepted by martyrs, and doubtless believed by their parents. In this manner, Hamas has set in train a self-reinforcing mechanism for suicide terrorism that is not only appealing to operatives but also legitimated and, more to the point, encouraged by the wider community from which these human bombs originate.

Current Strategic and Tactical Considerations Affecting Palestinian Suicide Terrorist Operations

In response to the escalating spiral of suicide bombings and other extremist attacks that characterized the first 24 months of the al-Aqsa Intifada, the IDF moved to institute a multilayered offensive-defensive posture that has since involved the following:

1. the reoccupation of key Palestinian population centers[45]
2. the aggressive targeting of the Hamas (and PIJ, PA) militant infrastructure
3. rolling, if unremitting, curfews and other restrictions on movement

[45] The reoccupation of these centers commenced on March 29, 2002 under the auspices of "Operation Defensive Shield."

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4. the upgrading and strengthening of a security fence originally erected in 1994 to prevent terrorist penetration from Gaza (Sherwell, 2002)
5. the construction (still under way) of a similar barrier to separate and seal off the West Bank (Hoffman, 2003a, p. 84).[46]

These measures, which have provided the military and intelligence services with far greater latitude to penetrate terrorist cells and to identify, arrest, and/or kill bombers before they are able to cross the Green Line,[47] have helped to staunch the overall number of suicide strikes against Israeli targets. Reflecting this, a total of 67 attempted attacks were thwarted during the first four months of 2003, with only six "successful" incidents actually taking place during the period (IDF, 2004).

In the face of this reversal, Hamas (and other Palestinian groups) have been forced to search for alternative ways of launching and deploying their martyr squads. The answer has been both to shift the locus of operations to Gaza and, for the first time, to use non-Palestinian cadres.[48] Staging attacks from this area, however, has proven remarkably difficult. Not only has the fortified security fence been highly effective in preventing the infiltration of suicide operatives,[49] access to Israel is tightly regulated by seven entry and exit points, through which all foot and vehicular traffic is channeled. These controlled-access areas have enabled the IDF to conduct extensive screening and monitoring of all persons seeking to leave or return to Gaza. Because of the spiraling violence that accompanied the onset

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[46] See also, for example, Chazan (2003) and Semple (2003).

[47] This designates the geographical boundary demarcating Israel's pre-1967 borders.

[48] Following the erection of the Gaza security fence in 1994, Hamas progressively moved the bulk of its suicide terrorist infrastructure to the West Bank; accordingly, it is here that IDF has concentrated most of its defensive measures since 2002.

[49] Indeed at the time of writing, the al-Aqsa Intifada had yet to witness a single suicide attack carried out by a *Palestinian* bomber from Gaza (Almog, 2003, p. 1). See also Sherwell (2002); Hoffman (2003a), p. 84; and Bennett (2004).

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of the al-Aqsa Intifada in November 2000, identity checks have become progressively more intense and detailed and are now tailored specifically to detect and intercept terrorists in general and suicide bombers in particular.

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CHAPTER FIVE

The Tamil Tigers

LTTE—a militant group that has waged a bitter separatist campaign in Sri Lanka for the past 28 years—was arguably the first terrorist group to institutionalize suicide terrorism as its signature mode of attack. Since carrying out its first martyr operation on May 5, 1987 (against a Sri Lankan Air Force headquarters that was formerly part of a Tamil high school) the Tigers have executed well over 200 suicide strikes on military, police, naval, and civilian targets across Sri Lanka. Indeed, until recently, LTTE was unique among militant substate entities around the globe in establishing this modus operandi as not only "normal" and positive but also the sine qua non of operational effectiveness.[1] Only in the new millennium have others adopted this as a standard operational tactic, starting with the al-Aqsa Intifada. The extent to which martyr operations have featured in LTTE's organizational and operational makeup give the group particular salience in assessments of suicide terrorism, not least by highlighting the degree of sophistication and acumen that can be attained in this realm, given the right combination of situational and environmental factors.

[1] By comparison, at the height of the Lebanese Shi'a terrorist campaign against American diplomatic and military targets in Beirut during the 1980s, suicide bombings accounted for fewer than 20 percent of all Hezbollah/Islamic Jihad terrorist operations (see Merari and Braunstein, 1984, p. 10).

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Background

Sri Lanka is an island located off the southern coast of India. The country has an area of roughly 65,610 km^2 and is split into nine administrative districts.[2] It has a total population of just over 18 million, 75 percent of which is Sinhalese. Roughly 17 percent of the population is Tamil, with Moors, Burghers, Eurasians, Malays, and Veddhas constituting the rest. Approximately 66 percent of the population is Sinhalese-Buddhist; Hindus and Muslims together account for 14 percent of the total; and Roman Catholics and other Christians make up the rest (Ministry of Finance and Planning, 1998, pp. 9–26).

The Sinhalese are mostly concentrated in the southern, western, and central parts of Sri Lanka, having originally come to the island from India. The roots of their civilization are, thus, largely Indian, although they have been influenced by other cultures, including the Portuguese; English; and, to a lesser extent, the Dutch, Burmese, and Thais. The bulk of the Tamil population is located in the drier Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka and is split into two distinct groups: The Jaffna Tamils, who descended from tribes that first arrived on the island well over 1,500 years ago, and the Indian Tamils, who descended from plantation workers brought to the island by British tea planters during the 19th and early 20th centuries (de Silva, 1996, p. 4).

LTTE emerged in the mid-1970s as a result of renewed intercommunal antipathy and violence. The roots of this friction date back to Tamil resentment of government "standardization" policies that were introduced during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s in an attempt to rectify the ethnic discrimination that the majority Sinhalese community claimed they had been subjected to under British

[2] These include the following provinces: Western, Southern, Uva, Eastern, Central, Sabaragamuwa, North Western, North Central, and Northern.

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colonial rule.[3] Reacting to a series of moves that were designed to ensure Sinhalese domination of the country's main educational institutions and bureaucracy, several opposition Tamil groups banded together in 1972 to form the Tamil United Front (TUF). At first, the group campaigned simply for linguistic, ethnic, and religious equality throughout the country. However, by the mid-1970s, the TUF had become associated with a far-more-hard-line nationalist stance, largely in reaction to the Colombo government's continued refusal to grant even limited concessions to the Tamil minority. In 1976, the TUF renamed itself the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), contesting the 1977 Sri Lankan elections on a mandate that called for the creation of a fully independent Tamil state, Eelam (Gunaratna, 1987, pp. 16–18, and Gunaratna, 1997, pp. 1–2).[4]

While the TUF and later the TULF were prepared to agitate for independence through the accepted political channels of the Sri Lankan state, a hard core viewed extraconstitutional violence as the only means of achieving Tamil nationalist objectives. During the 1970s, these militants formed a variety of underground guerrilla organizations dedicated to armed struggle against the Colombo government, using the TUF and TULF as more of a secondary vehicle for political representation, in much the same way as the Provisional Irish Republican Army does with Sinn Fein. Initially, 35 militant groups were created, although five quickly achieved dominance: the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation, the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam, the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front, the Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students, and the Tamil New Tigers (TNT) (Gunaratna, 1987, p. 27). Of

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[3] The Sinhalese claimed that, under colonial rule, the British had practiced an explicit pro-Tamil policy in an attempt to marginalize Sinhala independence designs and aspirations. This, it was argued, had placed the Tamils, who constituted only 12 percent of the total population, in a position of disproportionate power and authority at the time of independence.

[4] The latter source is an unpublished paper prepared as part of a project on how terrorism escalates conducted at the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence. See also Brogan (1990), pp. 228–229; and Mackenzie Centre (1995), p. 2.

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these, it was the last organization that was to assume the early mantle of the Tamil struggle.

Led by Chetti Thanabalsingham, TNT embarked on a particularly intensive campaign of assassination and violence in 1974 that was variously designed to silence progovernment Tamils,[5] eliminate informants and their police handlers, and disrupt police investigations into terrorist incidents and related criminal activities. Although TNT gained particular notoriety in 1975, when its gunmen murdered the Tamil mayor of Jaffna, Alfred Duraiyappah,[6] it suffered a mortal blow the following year, when Thanabalsingham was arrested.

Never one to repine, Villupilai Prabhakaran, TNT's second in command, assumed leadership of the organization on May 5, 1976. He renamed the group the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and set about to reconfigure it to conform to his own ambitious intentions and ideological designs. Affirming the legitimacy of the Tamil struggle on the basis of the Thempu Principles,[7] Prabhakaran fashioned a uniquely elite, ruthlessly efficient, and highly professional fighting force that emphasized selective recruitment (a policy that continues to this day) and an institutional ethos of unswerving dedication to the Eelam cause.[8] Over the course of the intervening 28 years, LTTE has

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[5] Significantly, a 1998 U.S. Department of Defense analysis drew attention precisely to this LTTE policy. A synopsis of the Tigers' "political objectives" included "Eliminate moderate Tamils and other Tamil militant groups that compete with LTTE for influence and power within the Sri Lankan Tamil community" (U.S. Department of Defense, 1998, p. 120; see also Gunaratna, 1977, pp. 8–9).

[6] "Masked Gunmen Kill Jaffna Mayor" (1975).

[7] The Thempu Principles affirm the following five nonnegotiable demands:

- recognition of the Tamils as a nation
- recognition of the existence of an identified homeland for the Tamil people
- recognition of the right of the Tamil people to self-determination
- recognition of the right of the Tamil people to a separate citizenship
- recognition of the fundamental right of all Tamils to look on the north and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka as their own country.

[8] According to Wijesekera (1993, p. 310), "We fight whilst others merely talk," was how LTTE both defined and distinguished itself from other Tamil militant organizations. According to Rohan Gunaratna (undated a, p. 13), the world's leading expert on LTTE,

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gained a reputation as one of the most sophisticated and deadly terrorist insurgencies in the world, successfully driving Colombo to the negotiating table in February 2002 and effectively forcing the government to accept terms for a cease-fire that have since allowed the group to set up a mini-Eelam state covering roughly 15 percent of Sri Lanka's geographic territory.[9]

To be sure, adroit employment of guerrilla tactics and Colombo's own military incompetence have been important factors in accounting for the Tigers' success.[10] However, a critical element that has helped to amplify these battlefield tactics significantly has been the efficient and consistent use of unconventional martyrdom attacks that have ranged from selective assassinations to large-scale assaults against economically strategic targets. Involving thoroughly trained operatives who have proven their ability to act decisively on

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> Prabhakaran insisted on keeping its numbers small, maintaining a high standard of training, enforcing discipline at all levels, sustaining a communications network, command and control, and commitment to the cause . . . . Therefore, an average cadre was highly motivated and dedicated.

[9] The cease-fire was brokered by Norway on February 22, 2002, and has since led to several rounds of talks between Colombo and LTTE over the last three years. At the time of writing, the Tigers had put forward their own "blueprint" for home rule, which calls for the establishment of a so-called Interim Self-Governing Authority covering eight Tamil-majority districts in the northeast and a subsequent plebiscite (five years later) on self-determination. Prabhakaran has given explicit warning that if this proposal is not taken seriously, LTTE will once again take up arms against the government. Many in Colombo believe that the Tiger leader has no interest in peace and is merely using the current period of relative stability to rearm, recruit additional cadres, and consolidate control over the north. See, for instance, International Institute for Strategic Studies (2004); "Peace Process Bogged Down" (2004); "Peace Talks" (2004).

[10] In many ways, SLAF has yet to emerge as a professional force that truly understands the nature and type of war it has been fighting in Sri Lanka. The SLAF, some critics claim, relies on outdated doctrines that place a premium on taking and holding static lines of defense through maximum force, as opposed to more-nuanced (and relevant) counterinsurgency operations that combine campaigns for civilian hearts and minds with directed, long-range disruptive missions deep inside enemy territory. The inevitable consequences of these various organizational and functional gaps have been repeated strategic setbacks, low morale (more than 60,000 have deserted from the army over the past 20 years), and a general lack of confidence that a military victory can ever be a winning proposition. (Author interviews with senior Western diplomat and SLAF members, Colombo, May 2004.)

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land and sea and incorporating unique and innovative intelligence and counterintelligence methods, these martyr operations have, arguably, become one of the most infamous hallmarks of the Tamil ethnonationalist war, as waged by LTTE. Indeed, in the eyes of certain knowledgeable Sri Lankan observers, the continuing threat and use of suicide terrorist assassination was principally responsible for forcing Colombo to negotiate the 2002 cease fire. As one retired foreign service officer and ambassador remarked:

> This is an example where terrorism has succeeded. We have been cowed. We have been intimidated by suicide terrorism. It is that simple. The fear caused by this tactic has made us cave in to them.[11]

The Evolution of Suicide Terrorism in LTTE: The "Prabhakaran Factor"

From its inception, Prabhakaran's omnipresent and domineering leadership has been central to the evolution and development of LTTE strategic tactics, including the group's use of suicide attack. The influence of the Tiger "supremo" in this regard first became apparent in July 1983, when he instructed all cadres to wear a glass capsule containing potassium cyanide that they were mandated to swallow in the event of imminent capture.[12] In issuing such a direc-

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[11] Author interview with retired foreign service officer, Colombo, February 2003.

[12] Prabhakaran's order to wear the capsule came on the heels of widespread ethnic riots during 1983 in which hundreds of Tamils were killed and thousands were injured and/or driven from their homes. The disturbances were a boon to LTTE recruitment efforts, with swelling numbers of highly radicalized youth who had hitherto largely resisted Tiger entreaties but now were actively receptive to the group's uncompromising agenda and keen to take revenge. It was to capitalize on the momentum these events generated that Prabhakaran commanded LTTE cadres to don the cyanide ampoule, declaring this as a symbol of their unwavering commitment to the fulfillment of the Eelam cause. For more on this episode see Gunaratna (1977), pp. 10–12, and Gunaratna (1987), pp. 32–33.

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tive, Prabhakaran had effectively ordered his fighters to kill themselves rather than be taken prisoner.[13] LTTE rank and file, far from eschewing this command, responded with alacrity. The poison-filled ampoule, suspended on a leather thong, soon became a badge of honor and a source of pride to Tiger recruits who were awarded the glass container amid great ceremony (Gunaratna, 1987, p. 20). It was the deliberate propagation and institutionalization of this mindset that subsequently proved to be so important for the development and success of LTTE suicide cadres.

The most significant turning point in LTTE's history of martyrdom, however, was still to come. Sometime in the mid-1980s, Prabhakaran decided to steer the group into an even more violent dimension of their struggle. The 1983 suicide truck bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Lebanon (see Chapter Three) reportedly had a significant influence on the Tiger members in this regard. Here, a terrorist group with limited resources was able to compensate for its inherent weaknesses in personnel and weaponry against an exponentially more powerful state adversary. Through a daring, spectacular attack, Hezbollah had achieved an astonishing result against a world superpower: compelling a U.S. president to withdraw the Marine contingent that had been deployed to Lebanon as part of a multinational peacekeeping force. That force collapsed in turn, with the contributing states withdrawing their own troops as well.

Seeking to harness the same coercive power and thereby exploit the profound sense of fear and intimidation that suicide tactics uniquely instill in their targets and target audiences, Prabhakaran viewed martyrdom as a potentially decisive force equalizer. Indeed, it was his conviction that, if LTTE did not resort to such operations, both for their devastating tactical and psychological impact, the group would never achieve its fundamental goal, Tamil Eelam. "With

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[13] Author interviews with former LTTE cadres in Colombo, Jaffna, and Batticoloa, Sri Lanka, December 1997. See also Gunaratna (undated b), which is an expanded version of a presentation given at the First International Conference on Countering Suicide Terrorism in Herzilya, Israel, in February 2000.

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perseverance and sacrifice," Prabhakaran is reported to have explained (Gunaratna, 2000),

> Tamil Eelam can be achieved in 100 years. But if we conduct Black Tiger [suicide] operations, we can shorten the suffering of the people and achieve Tamil Eelam in a shorter period of time.

If the Hezbollah attack specifically inspired Prabhakaran to employ suicide tactics in the Sri Lankan context, his love of films detailing military, criminal, and terrorist exploits (both real and fictional) reportedly influenced the direction and style these attacks would take. Perhaps the best illustration of this was Rajiv Gandhi's assassination in 1991.[14] A single female suicide operative detonated a specially tailored explosive vest worn under her outer garments after giving the Indian Prime Minister a sandalwood wreath, which bore a striking resemblance to a scene from a generically titled film, *Death Wish*. In this Asian-released movie, a beautiful girl apparently presents a bouquet of flowers to the President of the United States and then kills both him and herself by exploding a bomb concealed beneath her clothing or within the bouquet.[15]

Prabhakaran's real genius, however, was in fabricating a historical narrative for LTTE and the Tamil people that became inseparable from the need to resort to suicide terrorism. Significantly, this created and perpetuated an ethos of selflessness and willful martyrdom that has systematically come to permeate the entire movement. Two per-

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[14] Prabhakaran singled out Gandhi for assassination following his decision to terminate all support for LTTE and lead a peacekeeping force to stabilize the situation in Jaffna. During the 1980s, Delhi's external intelligence division, the Research and Analysis Wing, had been at the forefront of training Tamil militants, largely as a means of indirectly pressuring Sri Lanka to remain within its nonaligned sphere of influence and to refrain from the experimental market-based economic policies that were increasing Colombo's contacts with the West. By the mid-1980s, an estimated 20,000 militants had received training in India, most of which was conducted in dedicated paramilitary camps located in Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Bombay, Vishakhapatnam, and Chakrata (the country's premier military academy).

[15] Author interview with former senior LTTE cadre, Colombo, December 1997.

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sistent themes have been integral to this process and the general Tiger explanation and justification for the need to resort to suicide attack.

The first, as noted above, is the idea that extreme personal sacrifice by LTTE warriors today is essential for securing the ethnonational interests of Tamil generations tomorrow. The cornerstone of the group's institutional belief system, accordingly, has become the principle of individual self-sacrifice and martyrdom, undertaken for the greater, future good of the Tamil people.[16] The second is a notion embedded in the "force equalizing" dimension of suicide attacks, specifically that these tactics are highly instrumental in politically, physically, and psychologically balancing the asymmetric "military equation" between state (the Sri Lankan government) and nonstate (LTTE) actors.[17] According to the Tigers' political head, S. Thamilchelvam, the organization has no choice but to employ martyrdom strikes, given that Sri Lanka's Tamil population is only about a quarter that of the majority Sinhalese: Martyrdom is thus needed to "ensure maximum damage done with minimum loss of life" (Waldman, 2003).

Inextricably intertwined with both themes is LTTE's carefully cultivated and meticulously depicted image of being—specifically because of its reliance on suicide tactics—both an elite and invincible fighting force.[18] This deliberately constructed mythology can be

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[16] This idea is reflected in the Tamil word *thatkodai*, which means *to give yourself* and is the preferred vernacular for the organization's suicide operations. According to S. Thamilchelvam (as reported in Waldman, 2003), LTTE suicide cadres regard these attacks as

> a gift of the self—self-immolation, or self-gift. . . . The person gives him or herself in full. When one enlists, there is no remuneration. The only promise is that I am prepared to give everything I have, including my life. It is an oath to the nation.

The word *thatkodai* is thus the preferred terminology, rather than the Tamil word *thatkolai*, which means *to kill oneself.*

[17] Author interviews in SLAF, Colombo, May 2004.

[18] LTTE's reputation and prowess were greatly enhanced by its success in compelling the 1990 withdrawal of the Indian Peace Keeping Force sent to restore order and impose stability on the predominantly Tamil northern and northeastern parts of the island. After three years of persistent LTTE attack and harassment, the Indians left Sri Lanka—a

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traced directly to the first LTTE suicide attack, which was executed (as previously noted) on May 5, 1987, by "Captain Millar," one of LTTE's most important martyrs. The target was a former Tamil high school that the SLAF had taken over for use as a headquarters.[19] It was a textbook vehicular strike, reminiscent of the attack on the Marine barracks four years earlier, involving an explosives-filled truck driven by a determined and dedicated bomber. The assault killed 75 people, and the news radiated throughout Sri Lanka, generating widespread shock and horror. The Sinhalese majority viewed the incident as not only a massive military loss and political setback but also a devastating psychological blow. More pointedly, it endowed LTTE with an aura of fanaticism, determination, and invincibility that created a sense of profound fear and intimidation throughout the country because the integration of battlefield suicide cadres with conventional guerrilla attacks made LTTE strike units very daring.

"Captain Millar" became a shining exemplar for LTTE suicide cadres, who, in contrast with martyrs from Hamas and other Palestinian groups, are generally among LTTE's most battle-hardened, experienced, dedicated, disciplined, and valued fighters.[20] Indeed, these are the very reasons they are chosen for the organization's most highly vaunted unit—the "Black Tigers"—a suicide squad that constitutes an even more select subdivision within what is an already highly discriminating body of warriors. The Black Tigers are considered the "elite of the elite," Gunaratna notes—a designation that comes directly from Prabhakaran's own "belief that 'everybody must fight for the nation but only a few can do suicide operations'" (Gunaratna, undated b, p. 9).

For an organization intent on constantly burnishing an image of professionalism and ruthless dedication to the cause, it was only logi-

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singularly dramatic achievement for any terrorist group or insurgent movement given that country's military power and prowess.

[19] According to information supplied by a Sri Lankan Army intelligence officer known to one of the authors. See also Waldman (2003).

[20] Author interview with former senior LTTE cadre, Colombo, December 1997.

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cal that the policy of fostering and perpetuating a profound sense of "eliteness" was extended to encompass the special male and female Black Tiger units within the organization. Thus, in addition to whatever other personal attributes and competencies potential recruits brought to LTTE as a whole, candidates for the highly valued and venerated suicide strike forces are required to demonstrate even greater motivation and even more zealous dedication to Eelam and LTTE.[21]

Through these various dimensions, Prabhakaran has thus been a consistent and central guiding influence in LTTE suicide tactics and operations. As we have seen, the Tiger leader was not only instrumental in inculcating a mindset of deliberate self-sacrifice throughout the organization, he was also integral to legitimating, rationalizing, and venerating the use of martyrdom as a signature mode of attack.

LTTE Suicide Terrorism: Training, Tactics, and Execution

LTTE's suicide cadres include the land-based Black Tigers and a special maritime attack unit, the Sea Tigers. While there are many similarities, significant differences exist, especially in training for their respective operational environments.

The Black Tigers

The Black Tigers constitute LTTE's main suicide wing. The unit currently numbers some 350 cadres who are invested with the responsibility for carrying out three main types of operation:

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[21] Proof of this commitment may be found in the laminated identification cards that LTTE suicide cadres are required to carry on missions in Colombo. Written in both English and Sinhala and emblazoned with skull and crossbones, the cards categorically state that any attempt to prevent the perpetrator from reaching his or her intended target will result in an instant explosive detonation, killing all in the immediate vicinity ("payloads" are generally exaggerated to augment the warning). Author interviews at the Internal Intelligence Directorate (IID), Colombo, May 2004.

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- those used primarily on the battlefield and directed against SLAF combat troops and military personnel and assets in rear areas or defined war zones
- those that are aimed against critical national infrastructure; civilians; and such urban complexes as railway stations, religious shrines, and banks
- those that target what LTTE expansively defines as "very important persons," including elected leaders; prominent political figures; other high-level government functionaries; senior military, police, and intelligence commanders; and, occasionally, lower-ranking members of the security community whose competence has attracted the attention of the Tigers.[22]

As noted above, the Black Tigers receive perhaps the most demanding training of any LTTE unit, involving endless physical endurance, psychological, and indoctrination sessions. Prospective suicide bombers are taught where to place themselves and their bombs to be most effective and how to avoid detection. Those who successfully pass the "death course" are subjected to the tightest security, their identity generally only known to the highest echelons of LTTE leadership.[23] The reason for this intensive regime is that, unlike those in Hamas, Hezbollah, PIJ, and the Chechens, Tiger suicide bombers are reserved for the most important operations, such as the assassination of preselected government and security personnel or the destruction of strategically important buildings.[24]

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[22] Author interview at the National Intelligence Bureau (NIB), Colombo, May 2004. Since many of the operations in the second and third categories have taken place in Colombo—and at times have caused significant collateral casualties among civilians—LTTE suicide attacks on nonmilitary targets are never claimed. Such a stance is designed to limit the negative political fallout that is often an inevitable by-product of martyr-based tactics.

[23] During training, all Black Tigers are hooded, as are their instructors. Even when dispatched on joint missions, members will typically only learn the identity of others in their team immediately prior to the attack. Author interview at IID, Colombo, May 2004.

[24] Author interviews at NIB, Colombo, May 2004.

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All Black Tigers are selected from "conventional" LTTE military ranks. Inductees are observed for an extended period of time—sometimes as much as five years—and chosen on the basis of their ability to blend into unfamiliar environments, their capacity to operate independently and "think on their feet," and their perceived hatred of the enemy. Recruitment has, thus, tended to focus on appropriately skilled individuals who have also directly experienced some form of abuse or worse at the hands of the authorities.[25] Black Tiger intakes are small, generally no more than 10 cadres at a time. Once nominated, trainees are separated from the wider LTTE community, which facilitates both the aforementioned requirement for operational security and gives instructors greater latitude for deepening their ethos of martyrdom and self-sacrifice.[26]

Black Tiger training lasts for approximately 8 to 9 months and is split into two components. Phase I focuses on honing physical and mental fitness and developing proficiency in a baseline set of skills, such as bomb construction, weapon handling, vehicle and motorcycle driving, countersurveillance, and interrogation resistance techniques. Phase II emphasizes specialized, mission-oriented training. During this part of the course, Black Tiger instructors separate cadres according to designated operations—some to prepare for selective assassinations, others to carry out strategic assaults and attacks against the SLAF. Those assigned to target VIPs receive technical career instruction to enable them to fit comfortably into a predetermined cover. This can involve training for their assumed cover, as well as simple reading and writing skills. Those retained for more-complex military and/or critical infrastructure strikes are taught advanced covert penetration techniques and decoy methods designed to maximize the number of casualties in a predetermined "kill zone." In both instances, operatives continually practice simulated missions, either by using tabletop models of designated targets; practicing with full-

[25] Author interviews at NIB, Colombo, May 2004.

[26] Author interview with LTTE cadre, Colombo, February 2003.

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scale, specially constructed mock-ups; or performing test runs to evaluate the effectiveness of extant security measures and procedures.[27]

Complementing this rich and diverse regimen is a concerted intelligence effort and a highly creative research and development (R&D) program. No suicide mission is ever carried out before thorough surveillance of the target has been carried out. All Black Tigers are also accompanied by trained handlers—drawn from the group's spy wing (the Tigers' Organization for Security Intelligence Service)—to ensure that they are fully familiar with their surrounding environment. In most cases, operations are also videotaped for postincident debriefings; these studiously examine the individual strengths and weaknesses of attacks to make sure that negatives are not repeated and, just as importantly, that positives are replicated.[28] The overall thoroughness of these procedures can be gauged by the number of successful missions that the Black Tigers have executed—roughly 80 percent of all suicide operations are believed to have achieved their immediate, primary aims—as well as by the long-term planning and preparation that have been devoted to some of the group's most audacious strikes, such as the following:

- the 1990 assassination of Gandhi, which Prabhakaran reportedly ordered in 1987
- the 1993 assassination of Sri Lankan head of state, Ranasinghe Premadasa, which was performed by a deep-penetration mole who spent several years establishing his status as a trusted member of the presidential staff
- the 1996 bombing of the Central Bank in Colombo, which involved the predeployment of a Black Tiger strike team some 90 days before the attack[29]

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[27] Interview, former Black Tiger cadre, Colombo, May 1998.

[28] Interview, Internal Intelligence Directorate, May 2004.

[29] The 1996 bombing of the Central Bank is the worst act of terrorism ever to have taken place in Sri Lanka, resulting in 100 deaths and more than 1,400 injuries.

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- the 2000 assault on the Bandaranaike International Airport, which one Western diplomat described as a classic example of how to covertly case a strategic target venue in open sight.[30]

In terms of innovation, LTTE remains on the cutting edge of suicide technology. The group has manufactured and refined a variety of explosive vests that are specifically shaped to defeat visual inspections and casual body searches. Most of these body suits are equipped with built-in redundancy and fail-safe systems involving secondary and, occasionally, tertiary trigger switches. According to one highly informed Western official in Colombo, the Tigers have even designed a device that detonates as soon as the wearer raises his or her arms in an act of surrender, which Black Tiger cadres have used to deadly effect on several occasions after being intercepted by the police and security forces.[31] Besides explosive vests, the Black Tigers have proven their ability to expand the standard delivery mode for suicide bombs—the car and truck—to motorbikes, boats (discussed below), "tuk tuks," and bicycles.[32]

As with its military tactics, LTTE has also gone to great lengths to ensure that the specific operational dynamics of its suicide wing are relevant and well-suited to the specific Sri Lankan context. The Tigers' Organization for Security Intelligence Service, for instance, has taken advantage of the routine use of private contract security services to gain inside employment for Black Tiger cadres at sensitive and/or high profile venues, such as hotels, ports, train stations, and power complexes. More recently, the group has conspicuously exploited constrained police search and arrest powers, enacted as part of the February 2002 cease-fire arrangements, both to expand the number of Black Tiger safe houses in major metropolitan centers and to deploy VIP "followers" who have reportedly been tasked to kill

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[30] Interview, Western diplomatic official, Colombo, May 2004.

[31] Interview, Western diplomatic official, Colombo, May 2004.

[32] Interview, Internal Intelligence Directorate, Colombo, May 2004.

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assigned government ministers and senior military officers in the event that the current round of peace talks fails.[33]

Finally, LTTE has studiously observed the activities of the SLAF to refine and hone Black Tiger deception operations. Important in this regard has been the army and police habit of immediately congregating at the scene of a suicide attack before it has been sealed off. LTTE has deliberately used this habit to draw and concentrate security personnel in an unprotected zone, then hitting it with a second bomber, usually armed with twice the explosives. A good example of this tactic took place in late 1999, when two Tiger martyrs blew themselves up adjacent to the main gate of the army's headquarters in Colombo. The explosion immediately caused military personnel to come outside and investigate; within minutes, a sizable crowd of both junior and senior officers had formed beyond the secured perimeter of the facility. When this gathering was judged to be sufficiently large, a third operative, equipped with a far-more-powerful suicide vest, entered the crowd and detonated his charge, taking the lives of numerous additional SLAF members. The incident is noteworthy in the sense that the Tigers knew that they would not be able to penetrate the military complex to carry out the attack; hence, they developed a deception operation, based on their observations of military responses to suicide bombings, that effectively brought the camp to them.[34]

The Sea Tigers

In addition to the Black Tigers, LTTE has institutionalized the use of suicide assaults with its maritime wing, the Sea Tigers. Most attacks involve the use of explosives-laden boats that are rammed into surface frigates that have been singled out and surrounded by hunter Sea

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[33] Author interview, senior Western diplomatic official, Colombo, May 2004. According to this source, government ministers and army officers are fully aware that they are being trailed and speculate that LTTE cadres are monitoring their movements and have been ordered to assassinate them in the event that the current cease-fire is broken.

[34] Author interview, senior Western diplomat, Colombo, May 2004.

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Tiger "wolf packs." Since 1990, LTTE has carried out more than 40 suicide operations of this type with the basic aim of disrupting the mobility of Sri Lankan Navy (SLN) patrols off the northeast coast—a critical smuggling conduit for LTTE arms procured from overseas.

Unlike the Black Tiger suicide cadres, Sea Tigers are not specially trained, tending to consist of wounded militants who volunteer to undertake suicide missions as a last "hurrah" for the group. In common with their land-based counterparts, however, these martyrs do benefit from well-grounded reconnaissance and preparation alongside a well-developed and sophisticated Tiger "R&D" arm. Attack craft, for instance, are shallowly hollowed out in the fashion of a shoe and constructed from a lightweight material, fiberglass, to maximize their speed and maneuverability—both of which help to minimize both their radar silhouette and the physical target they present to defensive machine gun and cannon fire. Most of these vessels are also equipped with a special penetration rod that extends from the front of the craft and is designed to puncture the hull of targeted vessels *before* the attached explosive packs are detonated. This style of attack has been highly effective in amplifying the destructive force of resulting shock waves, allowing the Sea Tigers to cripple even large-scale combat ships.

Perhaps the most creative R&D effort has been the attempt to construct small, two-man suicide submarines for operations inside Sri Lankan harbors.[35] According to Gunaratna, these stealth vessels are specially designed with angled metal superstructures to reduce their radar cross sections. Revelations that LTTE was making concerted moves in this direction first broke in 2000, when a partially completed prototype was discovered at a Tamil-owned shipyard in Phuket. According to informed sources, the 5-meter vessel, while rudimentary, was capable of remaining submersed for up to six hours (at speeds of over 5 knots) and could very well have served as a blue-

[35] Sri Lankan sources also believe the move to develop submarines was driven by the Navy's purchase of new-generation Dvora fast-attack craft at the end of the 1990s, which were proving effective against the Sea Tigers' surface ships.

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print for more-advanced versions to attack operational naval surface ships.[36]

Sea Tiger martyrdom operations have been as decisive as those of the Black Tigers. Indeed, according to one senior retired naval officer, fear of being caught in a suicide strike has been one of the main contributors to recent decreases in SLN recruitment. It is also salient that, as far back as 1990, LTTE conducted assaults similar to the one al-Qaeda undertook against the USS *Cole*, a U.S. Navy destroyer that was attacked while at anchor in Aden, Yemen, in October 2000. This not only suggests that the group is some 10 years ahead of al-Qaeda in terms of seaborne attack capabilities but, more intrinsically, that it may be serving as a critical benchmark for developments in the wider arena of maritime terrorism.

Given the institutionalization and, indeed, veneration LTTE has accorded suicide terrorism, it is unlikely that Prabhakaran will move to disband his martyr units any time soon, the current cease-fire notwithstanding. In fact, the Tiger leader doubtless views the option of resorting to this style of attack as a de facto "Sword of Damocles," one he can bring into play should the Norwegian-brokered peace process begin to evolve in a direction that he deems counter to Tamil interests. At the time of writing, LTTE had already carried out one suicide strike against a police station in Kolluptiya (July 7, 2004). The group followed up by publishing a statement in *Viduthalai Puligal*—the group's official periodical—that war was imminent because of President Chandrika's lack of interest in pursuing meaningful talks with the north (Raman, 2004; "LTTE's Paper," 2004; "Enemies of Peace," 2004; "Female Suicide Bomber," 2004). In undertaking these actions, the group has sent a clear message that its martyr squads remain fully functional and are ready to act against a Sri Lankan state that continues to be viewed with considerable antipathy and suspicion.

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[36] Author interviews at NIB, Colombo, May 2004; see also "Lanka Suspects" (2000) and Davis (2000), p. 28. It is not currently known whether LTTE has been able to successfully introduce submarines into its overall battle armory.

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CHAPTER SIX

Al-Qaeda

While al-Qaeda's use of suicide terrorism is new relative to that of LTTE and Hezbollah, it has quickly established itself as one of the tactic's most proficient practitioners. Already, the group has succeeded in realizing the most lethal and spectacular acts of martyrdom to date, in the September 11, 2001, attacks—which killed more than 3,000 persons—and the simultaneous bombings of the American Kenyan and Tanzanian Embassies in 1998—which resulted in 300 fatalities and over 5,000 injuries (Schweitzer, 2000). Al-Qaeda is also the first terrorist group to have effectively conducted suicide attacks on land, at sea (the bombing of the USS *Cole* off Yemen in 2000), and in the air (Gunaratna, 2002, p. 7; Hegghammer, 2002). In short, al-Qaeda has expanded and refined the practice of suicide terrorism from both a tactical and a strategic perspective.

Al-Qaeda: A Brief Background

Al-Qaeda was born in the crucible of the anti-Soviet mujahideen struggle in Afghanistan. The 1979–1989 war was central to the early crystallization of the movement in two main respects. First, the 25,000 Islamists from around the world who volunteered to take up arms against Moscow—all of whom gained extensive practical and ideological experience in the fundamentals of jihadist guerrilla war—provided al-Qaeda with its first recruits. Second, the defeat of

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the Soviet Union and the subsequent collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, while certainly not solely a factor of the mujahideen resistance, impressed them with a fundamental lesson: that, with sufficient resources and commitment, a small band of religious zealots can defeat a military superpower.[1]

A central figure in helping organize the Afghan guerrilla campaign was Osama bin Laden. One of 50 sons sired by a wealthy Saudi businessman, he played a major role in raising funds and disseminating propaganda for the jihadist movement, working primarily through Abdullah Azzam's Maktab al-Khidamat (Services Bureau) (Gunaratna, 2002, p. 86; Reeve, 1999, p. 163; Government of Australia, 2004, p. 23; Paz, 2002, App. 1; and "Spider in the Web," 2001).[2] During his time in Afghanistan, bin Laden came into contact with several leading Muslim fundamentalists who would later form the ideological and operational crux of al-Qaeda's inner core. Notable in this regard was Ayman al-Zawahiri, then a senior commander in Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) and undoubtedly one of the strongest influences in shaping bin Laden's own worldview and revolutionary religious thinking (Reeve, 1999, pp. 166–167).

Following the defeat of the Soviet Union, bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia, where he became increasingly vocal against the royal family and its perceived failure to defend the true values of Islam. His criticism became particularly pronounced after an offer to help liberate Kuwait from invading Iraqi forces was rebuffed in favor of U.S. assistance. When American troops were subsequently stationed directly on Saudi soil, remaining there after the end of the first Persian Gulf War, bin Laden used his high public profile as the "champion of the Afghan mujahideen" to directly challenge the religious

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[1] For an in-depth account of the central importance of the anti-Soviet campaign in Afghanistan to the development of al-Qaeda, see Chapters Two and Three in Bergen (2001).

[2] Azzam was a Palestinian activist and mentor to bin Laden. He adopted the view that all Muslims had a compulsory duty to wage unrelenting Holy War to reclaim lands formerly ruled by the Islamic caliphate. Azzam's doctrine was absolute, expressed through the motto "Jihad and the rifle alone; no negotiations, no conferences, no dialogue."

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legitimacy of Riyadh—essentially accusing the government of destroying the sanctity of the Muslim heartland. Progressively viewed as a renegade and threat to national stability, bin Laden was stripped of his Saudi citizenship and fled to Sudan in 1991 (Bergen, 2001, pp. 77–78; Fandy, 1999, 61; Rashid, 2001, p. 133).

It was here that the operational foundations of al-Qaeda were laid. Basing himself out of Khartoum and in collaboration with the ruling National Islamic Front (NIF), bin Laden set about creating a global jihadist enterprise committed to the restoration of the Islamic faith as the world's preeminent religion and culture. Financed by his own wealth and legitimate businesses, including Sudanese government construction contracts, the immediate aims were the withdrawal of all U.S. forces from the Arabian Peninsula, the overthrow of the Saudi government, and the establishment of an active assistance program to support Muslim fundamentalists battling secular and/or morally corrupt regimes (Bergen, 2001, Chapter 4; Cooley, 2000, pp. 121–123; Rashid, 2001, p. 133; Reeve, 1999, p. 178–187).

After being forced to leave Sudan in 1996 as a result of growing U.S. pressure on the NIF, bin Laden returned to Afghanistan where, under the auspices of the Taliban, he consolidated the functional and ideological parameters of al-Qaeda. While the basic objective of removing American forces from Saudi Arabia and overthrowing the ruling royal family remained at the center of the organization's focus, the globalist dimension of its agenda was extended to embrace the forceful ejection from the entire Muslim world of any foreign, especially Western, influence. The ultimate goal was the recovery of all Islamic lands—no matter how long ago they were "lost"—and the institution of polities that would eventually form one transnational religious "nation" (or caliphate) based on and reflecting bin Laden's own idiosyncratic fundamentalist worldview.[3] Critical to this end was the eradication of all Jews, "crusaders," and "idolaters of democ-

[3] See, for example, "Usamah bin Ladein" (1999). For a good analysis of al-Qaeda ideology, see Pavlova (2003).

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racy"—a message that was given explicit recognition in the now infamous Khost fatwa of 1998, which declares that killing

> Americans and their allies—civilian and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy mosque [in Mecca] from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim. This is in accordance with the words of Almighty God.[4]

The Khost fatwa was the first time that al-Qaeda specifically identified civilians as legitimate targets and is taken by most commentators as the formal announcement of the organization's birth. Between 1998 and 2001, bin Laden established a dedicated terrorist-guerrilla infrastructure committed to attacking and eventually destroying the United States and its allies. Benefiting from access to secure territorial basing in Taliban-controlled areas of Afghanistan, al-Qaeda took on many characteristics of a hierarchical organization, complete with permanent installations, fixed structures, standardized methods, and regular procedures.[5] These facets enabled long-term planning and training for the perpetration of the type of high-profile strategic attacks witnessed in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, Aden in 2000, and New York and Washington in 2001.

Since 2001, and with the loss of its secure haven in Afghanistan, al-Qaeda's structure has become more fluid and decentralized. The organization's activities now largely take the form of tactical strikes by global affiliates, as opposed to centrally controlled assaults executed by an inner core of jihadist activists. Indeed, many commentators presently refer to al-Qaeda as a "movement of movements"—reflecting its evolution from a relatively complex integrated network

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[4] As reported in the "Text of the World Islamic Front's Statement," 1998. For an interesting analysis of the 1998 fatwa, see Ranstorp (1998), pp. 321–327.

[5] For an excellent overview of this period, see Rashid (2001), Ch. 10. See also Government of Australia (2004), p. 30.

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to an entity that has become more nebulous, segmented, and polycentric.[6] While this fragmentation has definitely constrained al-Qaeda's ability to conduct large-scale suicide attacks against hardened venues, it has somewhat inadvertently served to accelerate the tempo and increase the geographic spread of smaller-scale contingencies, which now routinely focus their acts of martyrdom on highly vulnerable, civilian-centric target audiences.

The Ideological Roots of Al-Qaeda Suicide Terrorism

While militant Islamic fundamentalists are certainly not the only extremist entities to have engaged in suicide terrorism, the tactic has been common to many of these movements. However, even among these organizations, the extent to which martyrdom attacks are integrated into overall ideological and tactical repertoires has differed (as can be seen with the examples of Hamas and Hezbollah). In this respect, there can be little doubt that al-Qaeda, more than any other Islamist group, has made suicide terrorism a centerpiece of its organization.

In his book, *Inside al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, which provides an in-depth analysis of the organization's documents, transcripts of communications among its members, and interviews with al-Qaeda leaders themselves, Rohan Gunaratna suggests that suicide terrorism is firmly embedded in both the ideology and the strategy of the group. While other Islamist organizations might use these unconventional operations and have a rhetorical justification for such tactics, Gunaratna suggests that the culture of martyrdom is far more firmly embedded in the psyche of al-Qaeda than any other Muslim group—reflecting what Juan Cole and others have referred to as a

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[6] From a discussion during the New Trends in Terrorism: Challenges for Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism Seminar in Lisbon, July 4–5, 2002. See also Gunaratna, (2004), pp. 51–55.

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highly effective and pervasive form of collective psychological self-belief (Gunaratna, 2002, p. 7; Cole, 2003).

To be sure, while other terrorist groups prepare their fighters to give up their lives for "the cause" if necessary, few have invested as much time and effort as al-Qaeda in actually *programming* its fighters for death. In large part, the organization has been able to achieve this effect by designing specialized courses and constructing secret camps to train its volunteers for martyrdom operations, thereby *institutionalizing* the techniques of suicide terrorism to an extent not seen in other terrorist groups (with the exception of LTTE—see Chapter Five). In fact, to the degree that al-Qaeda stresses training its operatives for missions, the organization actually puts greater emphasis on psychological than on military preparation. The hijackers used for the September 11 attacks are a case in point. Most of these men did not undergo extensive guerrilla or insurgent training, but all were subjected to a concerted regimen of mental conditioning, especially in terms of their purported religious duty to die in the service of Allah (Gunaratna, 2002, p. 73).

The typical path for a recruit to join al-Qaeda highlights this emphasis on psychological rather than military training. Rather than inducting cadres into camps, where they are instructed in military and terrorism operations, new volunteers are most often drawn from students who attend "neofundamentalist" mosques and madrassas. During their studies at these religious institutions, conservative imams repeatedly proclaim the "universal victimhood of Islam" and the related notion that, since the Muslim faith offers solutions to all problems, the hardships of Islamic societies are, by default, the result of Christian and Zionist conspiracies. Only after a substantial period of indoctrination, which includes becoming acquainted with radical texts that substantiate these claims, are students told of alternatives, including the option of traveling to militant camps in various "lands of jihad" (Pavlova, 2003).

From the time they first enter a mosque, Al-Qaeda members are thus continuously exposed to the psychological and spiritual influ-

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ences of Islamist ideologues and especially to the message that martyrdom is the highest priority of "true Muslims." Ongoing indoctrination is coordinated through specially designated religious instructors and continues not only while they are at the training camps, but even into assignments on the battlefield. This intensive and comprehensive program of spiritual learning underscores al-Qaeda's firm belief that it is only through religious mental preparation that fighters will be produced with the necessary "clarity of thought" to willingly sacrifice themselves in pursuit of the wider jihadist cause (Gunaratna, 2002, p. 72–73). Certainly, this seems to have been the assumption behind the *Doomsday Document*, the treatise found in the luggage of the leader of the September 11 attacks, Mohammad Atta. As Cole (2003) notes, of the 15 instructions outlined for the hijackers to follow the night before their mission, 11 were concerned solely with mental and religious preparation, emphasizing both individual shows of ritualistic faith and group prayer sessions.[7]

Beyond these considerations, al-Qaeda has placed a premium on using operational psychological training to free its members from the conceptual problems associated with reconciling the Koranic prohibition against suicide. Accordingly, the 14 mandatory qualifications implicitly required of persons seeking admission to an al-Qaeda group include knowledge of Islam, an ideological commitment to bin Laden's Muslim world vision, and the willingness to "do the work and undergo martyrdom for the purpose of achieving the goal and establishing the religion of majestic Allah on earth." (Gunaratna, 2002, p. 73).

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[7] Although the hijackers were also instructed to inspect their weapons and review their plans as part of their preattack preparations (instructions 12 and 13, in particular), these tactical components were clearly accorded far less importance than the psychological aspects of the mission. Cole additionally highlights that, while al-Qaeda operatives are often encouraged to engage in antinomian behaviors (such as frequenting strip clubs and drinking heavily) to help deceive any persons tracking them, such practices are also undertaken to remind cadres of the heavenly rewards promised in heaven and to instill a sense of guilt and desire for purification through self-sacrifice.

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Al-Qaeda's insistence that operatives be willing to engage in martyrdom operations is specifically supported and sanctioned by the ideological heritage of the group, which Abdullah Azzam originally conceptualized in 1987. In *Join the Caravan*, Azzam emphasizes not only the requirement of jihad from all "true Muslims" but also the importance of obedience to the notion of (militant) holy war, regardless of the demand:

> When the enemy enters that land of the Muslims, jihad becomes individually obligatory, according to all the jurist, mufassirin, and muhaddithin . . . . When jihad becomes obligatory, no permission of parents is required . . . . Donating money does not exempt a person from bodily jihad, no matter how great the amount of money given . . . . jihad is the obligation of a lifetime . . . . Jihad is currently individually obligatory, in person and by wealth, in every place that the disbelievers have occupied. It remains obligatory continuously until every piece of land that was once Islamic is regained . . . . Jihad is a collective act of worship, and every group must have a leader. Obedience to the leader is a necessity in jihad, and thus a person must condition himself invariably obey the leader [sic], as has been reported in the hadith: "You must hear and obey, whether it is easy or difficult for you, in things which are pleasant for you as well as those which are inconvenient and difficult for you."[8]

In an article written for *Al-Jihad* a year later, Azzam goes on to affirm:

> Every principle needs a vanguard to carry it forward and, while focusing its way into society, puts up with heavy tasks and enormous sacrifices. There is no ideology, neither earthly nor heavenly, that does not require such a vanguard that gives everything it possesses in order to achieve a victory for this ideology. It carries the flag all along the sheer, endless and difficult path until it reaches its destination in the reality of life, since Allah has destined that it should make it and manifest itself. This van-

[8] This translation of the original is taken from Gunaratna (2002), 87.

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> guard constitutes al-Qa'idah al-Sulbah for the expected society.
> . . .
>
> It must jump into the fire of the toughest tests and into the waves of fierce trials.
>
> The training leadership shares with them the testing march, the sweat and the blood. The leadership must be like the motherly warmth of a hen whose chicks grow under its wings, throughout the long period of hatching and training.
>
> This vanguard has to abstain from cheap worldly pleasures and must bear its distinct stamp of abstinence and frugality.
>
> In like manner it must be endowed with firm belief and trust in the ideology, instilled with much hope for its victory.
>
> There must be a strong determination and insistence to continue the march no matter how long it takes.
>
> Travel provision is among the most important items on this march. The provision consists of meditation, patience and prayer.
>
> Loyalty and devotion.
>
> They must be aware of the existence of anti-Islam machinations all over the world.[9]

These assertions have been highly instrumental in solidifying the ideological commitment that all al-Qaeda members share for martyrdom. This has been particularly manifest in the network's institutionalization of suicide pacts, which are believed to be a common uniting factor among suicide bombers who pledge a mutual commitment to die in realization of their mission. In Southeast Asia, for instance, agreements of this kind have been repeatedly emphasized in the context of Islamists trained in Malaysia and Indonesia ("Al Qaeda Link," 2002). Indeed, the terrorists specifically involved in the October

[9] Translation taken from Gunaratna (2002), p. 3.

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2002 Bali bombings—the most destructive act of international terrorism since September 11—were trained in Afghanistan and the Philippines.

Thus, while al-Qaeda's motivation for martyrdom is couched in religious terms, it is mostly advanced through explicit forms of psychological indoctrination. Certainly this has been evident in bin Laden's own rhetorical affirmations, which consistently proclaim his network as the "spearhead of Islam" and the "pioneering vanguard of a panglobal jihadist movement" that through the "example" of suicide terrorism is specifically intended to serve as the source of inspiration for Muslim groups both near and far (Gunaratna, 2002, pp. 91–92).[10] Cole explains how mass-murder missions, in particular, have been justified and propagated in this manner—combining the virtues of both "greater" jihad (the overcoming of individual spiritual deficits) and "lesser" jihad (the military defeat of the infidel). It is in this context that Jessica Stern concludes: "The real target audience of [al-Qaeda's] violent attacks is therefore not necessarily the victims and their sympathizers, but the perpetrators and their sympathizers" (Stern, 2003).

The Practical Calculus Underscoring Al-Qaeda's Use of Suicide Terrorism

In common with Hezbollah, Hamas, and LTTE, al-Qaeda's adoption of suicide terrorism also embraces practical dimensions. Most fundamental is the practice's potential to elicit large-scale damage—something of direct interest to bin Laden, who appears to have concluded from the U.S. withdrawal from Lebanon in 1983 and the failed intervention in Somalia ten years later that exploiting the sensitivity to casualties is the most effective way to combat the United

[10] See also "Al-Qaeda Is Replicating, Rejuvenating and Reorganizing to Strike in the Region (2002).

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States (Osama bin Laden, as quoted in "'World Islamic Front' Threatens New Operations Against Americans," 1998):

> Our method . . . in this battle has been to continue to pile up more American corpses onto their unjust government until we break the arrogance of the United States, crush its pride and trample its dignity in the mud of defeat.

As previously noted, suicide terrorism is well suited to achieving this objective with the minimum cost. Indeed, Ayman al-Zawahiri, bin Laden's second in command, explicitly sets forth this belief in his book and "last will," *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*, stressing that al-Qaeda operatives must necessarily concentrate their energies on martyrdom because these tactics are "the most successful way of inflicting damage against the opponent and [are the] least [burdensome] to the mujahidin in terms of casualties" (Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 2001).

The empirical track record of terrorist attacks more than bears out the formidable coercive potential of martyrdom. As Robert Pape observes (2003, pp. 4–5), suicide bombings accounted for an average of thirteen deaths per strike between 1980 and 2001, compared to only one killing for more-conventional assaults (excluding the unusually large number of fatalities that occurred on September 11 and not counting the perpetrators themselves). He further notes that, although suicide attacks amounted to only 3 percent of terrorist incidents during this period, they accounted for nearly half (48 percent) of all deaths. (See also "Martyrdom and Murder," 2004.)

A related tactical consideration that has factored into al-Qaeda's calculations vis-à-vis martyrdom is its proven ability to spark widespread fear among target audiences. As *The Economist* explains in "Martyrdom and Murder" (2004):

> suicide bombings juxtapose terrorists' disdain for life with their victims' supposed love of it, which helps to create the impression of an undeterrable enemy, one freed by his self-disregard of death.

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As implied by Stern above, however, it is important to understand that the objective of striking fear into the enemy is not intended simply as an end in itself but rather as a means of inflicting collective punishment that can then be exploited to further radicalize and mobilize additional supporters and recruits. Because they can be so used, acts of martyrdom achieve an important secondary benefit: triggering additional strikes, which help to ensure attack tempos are both sustained and remain visible.[11]

Both these facets work to balance asymmetric power ratios, playing a crucial role in consolidating early organizational and operational development. It is reasonable to assume it was due to these interrelated tactical reasons that so many of al-Qaeda's early terrorist actions, both realized and planned, took the form of suicide strikes.

Al-Qaeda and Use of Suicide Terrorism: The EIJ Factor

For most of its existence as a visible terrorist entity, al-Qaeda has enjoyed an intimate working relationship with EIJ. The Egyptian group emerged in the late 1970s as a loosely organized collection of Muslim Brotherhood supporters and university students opposed to Cairo's secular government. In its initial stages, the EIJ focused its terrorist acts on politicians, administration officials, and bureaucrats, a campaign that is most commonly associated with the assassination of President Anwar Sadat in 1981 (International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism, undated, and Cooley, 2000). Following this particular incident, a massive internal crackdown was launched against the organization, causing many of its members to flee the country and join with the anti-Soviet mujahideen in Afghanistan, where they received additional training in guerrilla and terrorist tactics (International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism, undated, and Wright, 2002).

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[11] See, for instance, Hoffman (2003b), p. 437, and "9/11 Two Years On" (2003).

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This period of external "service" proved vital to the EIJ's operational and ideological identity, revitalizing a flagging campaign against Cairo and laying the foundation for what was to become one of the most virulently anti-Western agendas in North Africa (U.S. Department of State 2003, p. 111). Indeed, since 1993, the group's original focus of overthrowing the secular Egyptian government has been progressively overshadowed by a broader jihadist imperative that has seen its main mission as supporting and furthering bin Laden's vision of a unified transnational caliphate. One person has been at the forefront of promoting this wider Islamic ideal: Ayman al-Zawahiri, the EIJ leader.

Although al-Zawahiri first met bin Laden in Afghanistan, their friendship was cemented in Sudan in 1993, when the al-Qaeda network was still in its formative stages.[12] The Saudi renegade quickly resonated with the EIJ leader, forging a relationship founded on a common hatred of the West and Israel. When international sanctions forced bin Laden to abandon Sudan for Afghanistan in 1996, al-Zawahiri went with him to help form and develop his international extremist network. Two years later, in February 1998, the two Islamists issued the aforementioned Khost fatwa, which, with al-Zawahiri's explicit support, called on all Muslims to attack U.S. civilians worldwide.[13]

The subsequent formation of the "World Islamic Front for Jihad Against the Jews and Crusaders"—precursor to al-Qaeda—redefined EIJ. Al-Zawahiri directly tied his group to bin Laden's global war on the United States and its Western-secular allies. This change in operational direction was to include full participation in international terrorist attacks and full access to what had now become an established militant training and support infrastructure in Afghanistan (Wright, 2002, p. 83).

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[12] "Alleged Brains Behind bin Laden," 2001.

[13] For a lengthy quote of the fatwa, see Bergen (2001), pp. 95–96.

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Thus began al-Qaeda's close operational connection to EIJ. The effective merger of the two groups brought into the former's fold a hard core of some 200 disciplined and well-trained jihadists who had been developing and refining the "art" of suicide terrorism since at least the mid-1990s (Stern, 2003; Schweitzer, 2000). It is these EIJ cadres who have since proven so important in terms of honing al-Qaeda's martyrdom capabilities.

The centrality of the "Egyptian factor" to al-Qaeda suicide terrorism has been demonstrated in several ways. First, many of the manuals bin Laden's network has used to train its martyrs were based on the operational lessons and experiences derived from EIJ's own campaign of urban violence, including *The Jihad Manual*. Second, it is now known that a central planner and coordinator for the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania was Muhammad Ibrahim Makkawi, otherwise known as Saif al-Adel, an Egyptian who, at the time of this writing, headed bin Laden's personal security detail.[14] Third, militants either directly drawn from or instructed by EIJ reputedly authored the *Doomsday Document*, the spiritual guide U.S. intelligence officials believe was used to reinforce the psychological indoctrination of the September 11 hijackers (Cole, 2003). Finally, al-Qaeda's recent strategy of dispersing its operations and focusing on smaller, more-frequent attacks across the world is allegedly the product of Egyptian strategists seeking to compensate for a more-constrained operational environment in the post–September 11 era, as we will discuss in more detail below (Isikoff and Hosenball, 2003; Perry, 2003).

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[14] See the material on Saif al-Adel on the FBI's "most wanted" Web site (FBI, undated). Several Egyptians have also been indicted in connection with the 1998 bombings, including Mustafa Muhammad Fadhil, Muhsin Musa Matwalli Atwah, and Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah (see "Qaeda's New Links," 2002).

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The Operational Evolution of Al-Qaeda Suicide Terrorism

As previously noted, the scope and sophistication of al-Qaeda's use of suicide terrorism have been unique. Not only has the group developed the "trademark" of being able to conduct simultaneous suicide strikes on a truly global scale—some of which have been synchronized across international boundaries—it has also demonstrated a highly pragmatic streak in terms of its tactical agenda, moving among and exploiting different operational theaters and venues, as circumstances dictate. This section will expand on these interrelated themes, discussing the movement's evolving martyrdom trajectory in terms of the following:

- the shift from hard to soft targets
- the move from infrequent, mass-casualty attacks to smaller, more-numerous assaults
- the increased emphasis on suicide strikes to elicit destabilizing economic effects
- the emergent focus on Iraq and Saudi Arabia as new primary areas of activity.

Hard to Soft Targets

Between 1998 (when bin Laden first announced his fatwa against the West) and 2001, al-Qaeda focused most of its energy on attacking hard targets, such as embassies and military installations. These facilities were not only the most difficult to penetrate, they also represented the focal point of American power and influence abroad. Bin Laden appeared to reason that, in successfully hitting and destroying such venues, he would be able (1) to force the United States out of the various countries it was "occupying" (notably Saudi Arabia), (2) to compel Washington to curtail its support for "apostate" secular Arab and Asian regimes, and (3) thereby to transmit a message of power that could then be used to build morale and attract new recruits.

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The August 7, 1998, East African embassy bombings constituted the first major attempt to put theory into practice in this regard. The twin attacks in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam—respectively codenamed "Holy Kaaba" and "Al-Aqsa"[15]—took five years of planning, involved a wide logistical network that was coordinated through a bogus fishing business set up in Mombassa,[16] and employed two highly complex amplified explosive devices.[17] The paired assaults also exhibited solid operational security: a single electrician—Abdel Rahman[18]—was used to prepare the truck bombs, and all personnel not required for the actual execution of the attacks were shuttled out of Africa the day before the embassies were hit, along with any documentation that might endanger the combined missions (Bergen, 2001, pp. 105–112; "Bin Laden's Martyrs for the Cause," 2001; Windrem, 2003).

The bombings were timed to inflict the maximum carnage possible, with detonations set nine minutes apart, and were designed, in the words of bin Laden, to herald a "black day for America" (Miller, 1998). Certainly the strike in Nairobi, which accounted for the bulk of the combined 244 deaths in the two capitals, was instrumental in this regard. As Peter Bergen (2001, pp. 108–109) notes:

> To grasp the carnage unleashed by the bomb, a concoction of TNT and aluminum nitrate weighing several hundred pounds . . . one has to understand the area of Nairobi in which it was placed. The American embassy is on the intersection of two of the busiest streets of downtown Nairobi, a city of about two

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[15] Patrick Fitzgerald, summation, *USA v Usama bin Laden*, May 1, 2001.

[16] It is believed that al-Qaeda used one of its own freighters, the MV *Sky-1*, to transport the explosives used in the attacks.

[17] The bomb used for the Tanzanian operation consisted of 400 to 500 packets of ground TNT, each attached to oxygen-acetylene cylinders and then to 100 detonators linked to a pair of truck batteries. (Abigail Perkins, testimony, *USA v Usama bin Laden*, March 19, 2001; Jerrold Post, testimony, *USA v Usama bin Laden*, June 27, 2001.)

[18] Rahman, an Egyptian explosives expert, allegedly constructed the two truck bombs from scratch without the benefit of notes.

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> million. The nearby railway station ensures a constant stream of travelers and of vendors to service them, as well as a large number of buses going to and fro. And the bomb went off in the middle of the morning on a workday. It is as if the device had been placed near Manhattan's Grand Central terminal on a Friday morning. Or at the World Trade Center.

Two years later, al-Qaeda's ability to strike at hard targets was given further expression with the suicide bombing of the USS *Cole* off the coast of Yemen. Planned and executed by the group's former head of naval operations, Abdel Rahim Mohammed Hussein Abda al-Nashiri (otherwise known as the "Prince of the Sea"),[19] the attack demonstrated al-Qaeda's adroit capacity to switch from land-based to maritime environments and carry out effective strikes against highly advanced warships even in areas of designated strategic priority for the United States. More to the point, although the USS *Cole* bombing killed just 17 sailors, it underscored the utility of martyrdom as a cheap way to neutralize power imbalances and level the playing field in asymmetric force standoffs (Campbell and Gunaratna, 2003, p. 71; Bartholet, 2000; "Cole Blast Probe," 2000; Associated Press, 2000; "Cole Bombers," 2000).

The zenith in the focus on hard targets, however, came on September 11, 2001, which remains the most-sophisticated attack conducted by any terrorist organization to date. Suicide terrorism was, again, the preferred weapon. However, the delivery mechanism changed dramatically from an explosive-packed truck to the use of hijacked commercial jet airliners. As in 1998, the preparation and operational security were rigorous. The logistics for supporting and transporting the hijackers embraced a network that spanned the globe, relying on intermediaries who had established themselves deep within American society for a number of years. The key operatives all knew how to fly planes, and, while each member of the attack teams

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[19] Nashiri, a Saudi citizen who met bin Laden in Afghanistan during the 1980s, was arrested in Yemen in November 2002. He is also accused of planning attacks against U.S. and British naval ships in the Straits of Gibraltar and Hormuz. (See Richardson, 2004, p. 19.)

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was psychologically prepared to go to his death, it appears that most were kept deliberately in the dark about the true nature of their mission until the day of September 11.[20]

The targets chosen for the attacks—the World Trade Center and the Pentagon—were ideal, representing the pinnacles of American military and economic power. Moreover, the numbers of people killed in these assaults far exceeded al-Qaeda's expectations (especially in the case of the World Trade Center), more than fulfilling the desired goal of inflicting mass casualties as a form of collective coercive punishment.

Since September 11, al-Qaeda and entities affiliated with it in some way have focused primarily on attacking soft targets. The three years since 2002 have witnessed a dramatic rise in such strikes, with assaults ranging from nightclubs (for example, Bali, Indonesia, 2002) to synagogues (for example, Djerba, Tunisia, 2002), hotels (for example, the Marriott in Jakarta, Indonesia 2003) and public transport (for example, passenger buses in Iraq during the American-led intervention). In choosing such a course of action, al-Qaeda appears to be hoping that it can foster and project an image of being "everywhere at any time (see below)." However, it also reflects tactical innovation and pragmatism engendered by the U.S.-led global war on terror, which has made it increasingly difficult to conduct more-sophisticated, long-range strategic assaults on hard targets.

Smaller, More-Frequent Attacks

Although inflicting mass casualties remains a primary goal, al-Qaeda has had to alter its operational strategy since September 11 to focus on smaller, more frequent attacks. There are two main reasons for this change. First, the loss of a secure base in Afghanistan and the subsequent arrest of both senior and midlevel commanders has denuded the group of the necessary logistical and functional assets for

[20] For a detailed overview of the September 11 attacks, see National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (2004).

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planning an operation on the scale of September 11.[21] Second, because it can no longer exhibit clear command and control over its attacks—again, a consequence of the aforementioned loss of haven and leadership—al-Qaeda has been forced to rely increasingly on other terrorist groups that are, in some way, connected to the network to conduct its attacks.

While the parameters of these affiliate strikes have not approached anything near the high-profile assaults seen in East Africa, Washington, and New York, they have acted as a de facto force multiplier in the sense that they have been *regularly* perpetrated on a truly *global* scale. During 2003 and 2004, for instance, bin Laden's network was "credited" with a plethora of suicide attacks in various parts of the world, including Morocco, Spain, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, and Turkey (Cable News Network, 2003; Plant, 2003; Ressa, 2004). By contracting out its acts of martyrdom, al-Qaeda has ensured that the jihadist movement not only continues to be viewed as vibrant and relevant but also as one that remains effectively "immune" to the best efforts of the international counterterrorism community.

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[21] Notable leaders that have been killed and/or captured include

- Mohammed Atef, the group's initial operations chief, who was killed in a November 2002 US air raid in Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom
- Ramzi bin al-Sheeb, the reputed recruiter and financier of September 11 (and alleged "20th" hijacker), who was captured in Pakistan on September 11, 2002
- Abu Zubaydah, who is believed to have replaced Atef as the number 3 in the network and who was caught in Pakistan in March 2002
- Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, al-Qaeda's alleged point man on the Arabian Peninsula and main planner for maritime attacks (including, purportedly, the 2000 strike on the USS *Cole*), who was detained in a Persian Gulf state in November 2002
- Khaled Sheikh Mohammad, Zubaydah's reputed replacement as logistics chief, who was arrested in Pakistan in March 2003
- Riduan Isamuddin (aka "Hambali"), bin Laden's main point of contact in Southeast Asia (and the accused mastermind of the 2002 Bali bombings), who was seized by Thai forces just outside Bangkok in August 2003
- Ahmed Khalfan Ghilani, one of the FBI's 22 most-wanted terrorists and believed to have been a key figure behind the 1998 U.S. East Africa embassy bombings
- Abu Faraj al-Libbi, alleged to have been al-Qaeda's third-most-senior leader in 2005 and the main coordinator for operations in Pakistan.

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The November 2003 attacks in Turkey provide a good example of how al-Qaeda has used local militant cells to execute suicide terrorist strikes on its behalf. Two sets of coordinated bombings were carried out—the first on November 15 against a pair of synagogues in Istanbul, the second five days later, this time targeting the British Consulate and the Turkish headquarters of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation. Combined, 62 people were killed and over 700 injured. Al-Qaeda coordinated and underwrote the planning for the four explosions, using a local organization—the Islamist Great Eastern Raiders Front—to actually conduct the attacks ("Al-Qaida Link Feared," 2003; "Bomb Attacks on British Targets," 2003; "Syria Delivers Suspects," 2003). A statement subsequently sent to the Dubai office of *Al-Majallah* (a Saudi-based weekly magazine covering Arab and international issues) and provided by Foreign Broadcast Information Service (2003b) specifically attributed success for the multiphased operation to "the cooperation between the regional leaderships of mujahideen in all corners of the earth with regard to financing, training, planning and execution."

Emphasis on Economic Targets

Al-Qaeda's target set also includes U.S. installations or infrastructure whose loss would likely damage the U.S. economy. The group first realized the potential of this form of terrorism in the wake of September 11. Although the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were chosen primarily for their symbolic status as the seats of American commercial and military power, the financial damage the two strikes wrought was enormous (especially in the former case), affecting New York businesses, the airline industry, and tourism and indirectly contributing to a national (and, arguably, global) recession that still continues.[22] Al-Qaeda has since sought to "capitalize" on this success by specifically focusing on attack venues that have a high potential for

[22] Banking and insurance losses resulting from the September 11 attacks alone have exceeded $55 billion.

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economic disruption, such as oil facilities, banking institutions, seaports and airports, power grids, and commercial shipping. As bin Laden himself exhorts in a recruitment video made for the organization (as reported in Campbell and Gunaratna, 2003, p. 74):

> The economic bleeding is continuing to date, but it requires further strikes. The young people should make an effort to look for key pillars of the US economy which should be struck, God willing.

Indicative of the increased focus on economic targets was the bombing of the MV *Limburg* (since renamed the MV *Maritime Jewel*) on October 6, 2002.[23] A small fiberglass suicide boat packed with 100 to 200 kg of TNT struck the French-registered supertanker as it was preparing to approach the single mooring buoy at the Ash Shihr Terminal off the Yemeni coast. The resulting explosion punched an oval, 26-foot hole through the vessel's outer and inner hulls, both igniting a fire in the number 4 starboard cargo tank and causing the discharge of some 50,000 barrels of Iranian crude oil (Herbert-Burns, 2004, p. 7; Richardson, 2004, p. 18; "Maritime Security Measures," 2003, p. 55; "Terrorists Blamed," 2002; "Who Dunnit?" 2002). Apart from demonstrating the acute vulnerability of this class of merchant vessel to waterline suicide strikes, the incident is noteworthy for triggering a temporary but dramatic spike in international oil prices and for causing a severe hemorrhaging of the Yemeni economy, which was estimated to have suffered shortfalls of $3.8 million per month in lost port revenue in the aftermath of the attack.[24] More to the point, the bombing was ultimately revealing in confirming al-Qaeda's stated intention to target the petroleum sector

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[23] It is believed that the Abdel Hakim Ba'athiv–led cell of the (al-Qaeda–linked) Aden-Abyan Islamic Army actually executed the attack.

[24] These losses were largely brought about by elevated insurance premiums in the form of war risk surcharges that were levied on ships using Yemeni terminals, which caused many vessels to divert to other ports in the region. (See Herbert-Burns, 2004, p. 8, and "Fighting Maritime Terrorism," 2004.)

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as part of a general campaign aimed at destabilizing the fiscal base of the West:

> by exploding the oil tanker in Yemen, the holy warriors hit the umbilical cord and lifeline of the crusader community, reminding the enemy of the heavy cost of blood and the gravity of losses they will pay as a price for their continued aggression on our community and looting of our wealth.[25]

Al-Qaeda's continued focus on commercial jets further underscores the shift to economic targets. While the choice of this particular modus operandi undoubtedly reflects its past use as a successful form of mass destruction terrorism, there is good reason to believe it also belies a perception that such operations will result in additional setbacks to commercial aviation and tourism. Indeed, in December 2003, a number of flights were cancelled from Europe to the United States precisely because of reported attempts by al-Qaeda operatives to hijack and destroy the planes during the traditionally busy holiday season.[26]

Saudi Arabia and Iraq as New Theaters

Before 2003, al-Qaeda had generally avoided staging attacks in the Arab Gulf states, except in rare instances that carefully targeted U.S. or other Western interests. The group's "new strategy," however, appears to be focused on increasing the tempo of terrorist operations in this particular region,[27] with both Saudi Arabia and Iraq emerging as main centers of activity, not least in terms of suicide strikes.

Saudi Arabia. In Saudi Arabia, the first real sign that a change in operational direction was taking place occurred in May 2003, when a series of synchronized explosions destroyed three foreign housing

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[25] Alleged bin Laden statement, as reported by Herbert-Burns (2004), p. 8.

[26] See, for instance, "Possible Plane Plot" (2003) and CBS News (2003a, 2003b).

[27] The heightened focus on the Gulf States is reputedly a reaction to more-concerted counterterrorism operations in the region. See, for instance, Blanche, (2004d), p. 6.

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complexes in Riyadh, killing at least 34 and injuring over 190. Seven months later, another residential facility was bombed in the capital (resulting in more than 20 fatalities, 17 of whom were Muslims), with a further suicide attack against the headquarters of the General Security Service (the domestic intelligence agency) taking place in April 2004 (Isikoff and Hosenball, 2003; Blanche, 2004a, p. 5; Blanche, 2004b, p. 7; "Terror Back in Business," 2003; "The Moment of Truth," 2003; Gosselin and Miller, 2003; MacFarquhar, 2004).[28] The following month, Abdul Aziz al-Muqrin, bin Laden's alleged point man in Saudi Arabia,[29] posted a statement on several Islamist web sites urging further assaults in the kingdom, including concerted and sustained acts of martyrdom (Knights, 2004, p. 18; Fahmy, 2004). In so doing, al-Qaeda sent a definitive message that it was actively prepared to target Muslims and subject the ruling House of Saud to the same level of violence it had already employed against the United States and the West.

The unprecedented move against Saudi Arabia appears to reflect a long-term strategy aimed at first toppling the royal family and then favorably positioning sympathetic tribal sheiklıs and members of the military and business elite to secure control of the oil-rich kingdom.[30] Achieving this objective would deal a mortal blow to the economies of the developed world—it has been suggested that the price of oil could rise to $125 a barrel under such circumstances—as well as provide al-Qaeda with a symbolically powerful foundation on which to anchor its proposed transnational empire. As James Eldrige (2004, p. 1) argues:

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[28] A group calling itself the Brigade of the Two Holy Mosques—after the shrines in Mecca and Medina—took responsibility for the attacks.

[29] Al-Muqrin was born in Riyadh. He is an experienced guerrilla fighter, having seen action in Afghanistan—both against the Soviet Union and the U.S.—Algeria, Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the Ogaden region of Ethiopia. (See Boyne, 2004, pp. 9–10).

[30] Saudi Arabia sits on 25 percent of the world's proven oil reserves; is home to the world's largest single refinery (Ras Tanura); and, most importantly, retains the largest spare production capacity.

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> At the heart of [al Qaeda's] pan-Islamic Ummah (nation) would be Saudi Arabia, the home of Islam's two holiest cities, Mecca and Medina, and the world's top oil exporter. This pan-Islamic state—with the Arabian Peninsula as the seat of sovereign authority—would serve as both the political and religious leader of the Islamic world . . . . With the ability to influence global energy supplies, al Qaeda would have the tools to shape the political and security environments of dozens of other states. It would also have a sanctuary where it could establish and train conventional armed forces while maintaining its cadres of militants.

The Riyadh government has launched an unprecedented crackdown on domestic Islamist extremists since the May 2003 bombings, reportedly capturing or killing some 600 militants based in the country (Boyne, 2004, pp. 8–9; Blanche, 2004a, p. 5; Obald, 2004, p. 4). That said, al-Qaeda would seem to retain a latent potential for martyr operations in Saudi Arabia. At the time of our research at least one cell continued to work under the direct orders of al-Miqrin, and there are reports that radicals have co-opted dissatisfied elements in the intelligence and security services to facilitate future attacks on "high value" targets. In addition, neighboring Yemen provides a ready supply of weaponry used in suicide attacks (such as explosive belts), while the estimated two million Muslims who make the annual pilgrimage to Mecca every year offer an ideal recruiting pool from which to replenish jihadist ranks (Blanche, 2004a, pp. 5–6).

Although the long-term aim will continue to be the overthrow of the Saudi royal family, one can expect the immediate focus of suicide attacks to be on soft civilian targets. Three interrelated reasons account for this. First, the government's aggressive counterterrorism stance since May 2003 has made strategic strikes more difficult, particularly against the oil sector, which remains extremely well protected.[31] Second, operational problems have been further com-

[31] Riyadh takes the extremist threat to its energy sector extremely seriously, not least because the sector currently accounts for 90 percent of the kingdom's export earnings and 75 percent

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pounded by the large numbers of militants arrested across the country—a development that has almost certainly undermined the tactical planning and execution capabilities of local radicals. Third, al-Miqrin reputedly favors maximizing civilian casualties (he has already promised to "decorate" the kingdom with body parts), a character trait that would seem to tilt the short-term balance of Saudi terrorism—which is inherently personality-driven—in favor of bloody antipersonnel actions.[32]

Iraq. The scale and incidence of suicide strikes in Iraq has been even greater than that witnessed in Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless the extent and dimensions of al-Qaeda's activities in that country remain unclear. However, since the fall of the Hussein regime in 2003, bombings have become increasingly common, targeting Coalition troops, the offices and members of the U.S.-backed civilian administration, public transport, religious shrines, diplomatic buildings, facilities of nongovernmental organizations, and hotels. Since the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 and as of July 2005, Iraqi insurgents and outside foreigners have carried out over 500 suicide bombings (Jeh, 2005). Strikes against Shi'a mosques have been especially serious, with synchronized assaults in Baghdad and Karbala on March 3, 2004, resulting in 271 fatalities and 393 injuries.[33]

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of budget revenues. At any one time, up to 30,000 guards are protecting the Saudi oil infrastructure, while high-technology surveillance and aircraft patrols are common at the most important facilities, such as Ras Tanura. A special unit has also been established to oversee security at the major refineries. Coming under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior, this interagency body is made up of representatives from the Special Security Forces, the Special Emergency Forces, the General Security Service, regular elements drawn from the Public Security Administration, and specialized brigades of the National Guard. See Obald, (2004), p. 4.

[32] See, for instance, Knights (2004), pp. 17–19.

[33] Notable in this regard have been bombings against

- the U.S.-led allied Coalition headquarters in Baghdad, January 18, 2003
- the Jordanian embassy in Baghdad, August 7, 2003
- the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, August 19, 2003
- a Shi'a mosque in the holy city of Najaf, August 29, 2003
- the International Red Cross headquarters in Baghdad, October 9, 2003

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Attacks have tended to take the form of traditional car and truck bombings, although individual martyrs outfitted with explosive vests have also been regularly used, especially in anti-Shi'a missions. A variant of the latter tactic has involved recruiting and dispatching female operatives to infiltrate pro-American groups. The method was used with decisive effect in February 2004, when a female suicide bomber effectively wiped out the entire political leadership of the Kurdish minority in the town of Ibril, eliminating in a single stroke the regional governor; the deputy prime minister; the ministers for council affairs, agriculture, and human rights; and several senior functionaries in the patriotic union. On a few occasions, militants have also replicated the Hamas strategy of detonating explosive-packed vehicles as they pull alongside passenger buses, particularly in major metropolitan centers where the "opportunities" for maximizing collateral damage are greatest (Associated Press, 2004a).

Virtually all the suicide attacks noted above were orchestrated by Ansar al-Islam and other loosely affiliated Islamist entities working under the direct orders of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (whose real name is Ahmed Fadhil Nazzar Khalailah).[34] According to U.S. intelligence sources, the 38-year-old Jordanian is al-Qaeda's lead organizer in Iraq and the principal figure behind the ongoing insurgency against allied Coalition forces (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2003; "Fugitive Cast in the Role of Super-Villain," 2004; Windrem and Rivas, 2004; BBC News, 2004). Zarqawi's role in the country and his reputed connections, specifically with al-Qaeda, have been the sub-

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- Italy's paramilitary police command and control post in the southern city of Nasiriyah, November 12, 2003
- Shi'a shrines in Baghdad and Karbala (simultaneous bombings), March 3, 2004.

(See BBC News, 2004; "US Defends Security Setup in Iraq," 2004; "Death Toll," 2004.)

[34] In his address to the United Nations on February 5, 2003, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell named Zarqawi's presence in Iraq as evidence of a "sinister nexus between Iraq and the al-Qaeda network." Powell described Zarqawi as a Palestinian born in Jordan who fought with the anti-Soviet mujahideen more than a decade ago. Powell alleged that he returned to Afghanistan in 2000, where he oversaw various aspects of terrorist training, including the use of chemical weapons. (See Ford, 2004; "US Defends Security Setup in Iraq," 2004.)

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jects of both concern and uncertainty ever since the discovery of a letter he reputedly wrote in early 2004 in which he both claims responsibility for all acts of martyrdom carried out in the post-Hussein era and lays out a blueprint for triggering a bloody sectarian civil war pitting Shi'as against Sunnis. Divided into several sections, the document makes specific reference to the "two honorable brothers"—believed to be bin Laden (to whom he has since pledged full allegiance)—and describes Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) as a contractual agreement reached between Israel and Washington as part of a wider Zionist ploy to carve out a greater Jewish state stretching from the Nile to the Euphrates.[35]

While there is no conclusive evidence to show a direct al-Qaeda "hand" in helping to orchestrate Iraqi suicide attacks, U.S. officials have maintained that there is reason to believe this is the case. Most bombings characteristically use C-4 explosives, and many take the form of coordinated and/or multilocational strikes, both of which are trademarks of bin Laden's movement ("Ansar, Al Qaeda," 2004; "Mourning Iraqis," 2004; "Al Qaeda Bomb Plot Foiled," 2004). The arrests of several leading militants in 2004 lent further support to this possibility. Among those captured were Husam al-Yemeni and Hasan Ghul, both reputed to be senior commanders in al-Qaeda and suspected of playing leading roles, alongside Zarqawi, in working with Ansar al-Islam to promote and recruit for the wider pan-Islamic jihadist agenda (Sanchez, 2004).[36]

It should also be borne in mind that Iraq is well suited to the tactical and strategic imperatives of al-Qaeda. With the Taliban

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[35] The full text of the alleged Zarqawi letter is available on the Coalition Provisional Authority Web site (see Zarqawi, 2004).

[36] Western sources regard the capture of these two militants as particularly important, given their operational role in Iraq: Al-Yemeni reportedly acts as Zarqawi's right-hand man, while Gul (who is known as the "Gatekeeper" in wider terrorist circles) is thought to be a principal conduit through which al-Qaeda moves money and people around the Middle East, East Africa, and possibly beyond. Gul is also suspected of playing a part in organizing the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, although these ties are still being investigated.

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removed from power, the besieged state is clearly seen as a potential new beachhead that can be exploited to rally and remobilize (dormant) Islamic militants from the Middle East, North Africa, Western Europe, and other regions (Agence France-Presse, 2003). Moreover, attacks on Coalition forces, whether successful or not, can be used in propaganda to convey the familiar trope that the United States and its allies are vulnerable and, more important, that insurgents have both the means and motivation to confront and possibly defeat the world's mightiest military powers.[37] Finally, the pattern of terrorist attacks suggests a mindset that is compatible with one of the currents that has contributed to al-Qaeda's approach to the world. Specifically, what President Bush describes as a terrorist strategy designed "to tear Iraq apart with ethnic violence, to undermine Iraqi security forces, to demoralize our coalition and to prevent the rise of a sovereign, democratic government" (Bush, 2004) hints at a nihilistic mentality that is very much congruent with bin Laden's own normative conception of the "purposeful" use of militant aggression and martyrdom.[38]

In various ways, therefore, Iraq appears to be materializing as a test case for al-Qaeda's ability to recruit foot soldiers from emergent operational theaters that harbor strong or latent anti-Western tendencies. One can expect that the movement will work in conjunction with Ansar al-Islam and other loosely affiliated networks in the country, helping them to sustain a consistent, if not concerted, campaign of suicide (and nonsuicide) terrorism against allied Coalition interests. In addition, Iraqi cadres may well be used as an alternative "medium" through which to conduct Islamist attacks farther afield—a threat that remains salient not only for the Arab Gulf states but also in Europe and North and East Africa.

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[37] This potentially contributes to al-Qaeda's fundraising and recruitment efforts and to its internal morale-building by suggesting that armed resistance to a force as strong as America's is not an exercise in futility and that victory is possible.

[38] For more on the nihilism undergirding al-Qaeda and other contemporary terrorist movements, see Glucksmann (2003).

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusions and Policy Implications

Several pertinent conclusions can be derived from the foregoing analysis. First and most fundamentally, the decision to engage in suicide terrorism is not irrational but based on a carefully calibrated cost-benefit assessment of the utility of this mode of aggression. Hezbollah, Hamas, LTTE, and al-Qaeda have all used martyrdom to overcome erstwhile asymmetric power balances between state and nonstate actors, viewing the tactic as especially instrumental in destroying the fabric of trust and solidarity that ultimately holds society together. In addition, each of these organizations has consciously sought to exploit suicide strikes as a way to demonstrate the relevance and vibrancy of their respective operational tempos and, through this, to motivate and galvanize latent pockets of activist support.

Second, martyrs themselves are certainly neither desperate nor mad but are reasoned individuals who volunteer for self-sacrifice in the firm conviction that this is the best way to further the cause for which they are fighting. Islam forbids suicide, but a terrorist from Hezbollah, Hamas, or al-Qaeda believes he is conducting a divinely ordained, altruistic, and sacrificial operation for some collective good and thus that his act does not constitute suicide, being devoid of the selfish, personally idiosyncratic reasons usually associated with the individual act of committing suicide. At the same time, more-materialistic considerations also factor heavily in the calculations of suicide recruits, be they the promise of rewards in the "afterlife" or the guarantee of financial compensation for their families.

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Third, the four case studies suggest that "the cult of the personality" is likely to play an important role in the institutionalization of martyrdom. In both LTTE and al-Qaeda, for example, the influence of omnipresent and highly charismatic leaders has, arguably, been the most-decisive variable, influencing not only the initial decision to employ this particular tactic but, more intrinsically, the subsequent determination to adopt it as a signature mode of attack and a defining organizational hallmark. Prabhakaran, bin Laden, al-Zawahiri, and al-Zarqawi have clearly been central in this regard, playing crucial roles in first creating and then consolidating what effectively amounts to an "ethos of suicide terrorism" for their respective movements.

Fourth, and very much related to the above, when groups fully integrate the practice of martyrdom into their organizational structures, there is little prospect they will move to curtail the emphasis on this form of aggression, even should extant environmental situations change dramatically. LTTE, for example, does not appear to have reassessed the utility of pursuing tactical options through the Black Tigers, despite being engaged in a peace process since 2002. For the Tigers, institutionalization seems to have triggered a collective groupthink mentality that positively normalizes martyrdom not simply as useful but, more emphatically, as the sine qua non of their defining raison d'être and (perceived) constituent legitimacy.

Fifth, in all four cases, psychological preparation was critical to the recruiting, training, and dispatching of suicide operatives. This would seem to indicate that martyrs are neither born nor naturally inclined to this style of violence (in the way, for example, a serial killer is predisposed to multiple murder) but, rather, are created through constant subjection to an extreme regimen of ethnonationalist and/or religious indoctrination. Their reliability to execute their assigned missions is further enhanced by guides, escorts, or so-called "handlers" who are tasked with ensuring that the suicide attacker reaches his or her designated target.

Sixth, as with terrorism in general, a plethora of attack venues can be chosen for suicide bombings, from embassies and military

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outposts to nightclubs, synagogues, and public transport. While some of these targets may be chosen in the context of a deliberate war-insurgent strategy—as was or has been the case with Hezbollah in Lebanon and, to a somewhat lesser extent, LTTE in Sri Lanka—they are in most instances specifically selected for their "shock value" and potential to deliver a significant body count of civilian casualties.

Finally, the examples of Hezbollah, Hamas, LTTE, and al-Qaeda all variously highlight martyrdom as a tactic sustainable over the long term, largely because the perpetrating organization is able to keep costs to a minimum, both financially and in terms of human resources. This suggests that even severe logistical constraints will not necessarily affect a group's ability to engage in a protracted campaign of suicide terrorism adversely. In fact, such circumstances could very well prompt increased resort to this tactical option, given its inherent value as a cheap, yet highly effective, way to disorient vulnerable and edgy target societies.

What relevance do these conclusions hold for the United States? From the perspective of threat, they should underscore the potential danger of martyrdom to the country's stability. Not only does the U.S. domestic context provide a target-rich environment in which to act (attack venues include everything from cinemas, shopping malls, and sports stadiums to offices, subways, and universities), the psychological effect of suicide bombings is likely to be especially great, given the generally risk-averse nature of American society. Moreover, spokesmen representing al-Qaeda and/or its various affiliates—the main focus of Washington's global war on terror—have made it known that there is a plentiful supply of willing recruits, who remain ready, willing, and able to mete out maximum coercive punishment on the civilian population: "Those youths that destroyed Americans with their planes, they did a good deed. There are thousands more young followers who look forward to death like Americans look forward to living."[1]

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[1] Suleiman abu Gheith, as quoted in Islamic World Net (2001).

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In terms of response options, the findings highlight several measures that could be taken to address the tactical and strategic dimensions of martyr attacks. In the short term, initiatives should focus on reducing the operational attractiveness of the internal U.S. setting. Logically, these should proceed in the context of homeland security, emphasizing (1) strengthened border and immigration control; (2) comprehensive and rationalized target hardening that proceeds on the basis of regular, empirically grounded risk-vulnerability assessments; and (3) civil defense and public awareness programs designed to enhance overall societal resilience and confidence. Just as importantly, groups that have already demonstrated a willingness to use suicide attacks as a way of striking out against the United States—which is or has been true of two of the groups covered in this study (al-Qaeda and Hezbollah)—should be subjected to intense intelligence scrutiny and, when necessary, to harassment actions aimed at disrupting their day-to-day activities and planning.

Further, American law enforcement agencies should receive additional relevant training to better prepare them and their jurisdictions to counter the threat of suicide terrorism. Improving and strengthening current training of U.S. law enforcement to prevent and defend against dangerous tactics should commence in earnest before this phenomenon materializes in this country. Together, the understanding of the dynamics of suicide terrorism presented in this report and the recently published primer specifically written for American law enforcement as part of this overall research effort (Hoffman et al., 2004) provide a useful foundation for rectifying this existing training deficit and creating a firm first line of defense against this tactic. Over the longer term, a concerted effort should be directed toward reshaping the supportive environment surrounding the recruitment and training of martyrs. Policies aimed at empowering the voices of moderate communitarian ethnonationalist and religious leaders will be critical in this regard. If appropriately fostered and supported, these individuals could play decisive roles in helping break the cycle of indoctrination that has proven so important to the nor-

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malization and, indeed, veneration of suicide terrorism, not least by confronting and challenging the inconsistencies and inadequacies of militant ideologues who seek to exonerate self-sacrifice from both a pragmatic and idealistic standpoint.

Finally, the United States should keep a close watch on extant and emergent extremist entities that revolve around personable leaderships espousing absolutist, Manichean doctrines and worldviews. These groups that are the most likely to fully institutionalize unconventional tactics, such as suicide bombings, into operational agendas, to imbue these methods with an organizational ethos of permanence, and to refine their execution through investment in dedicated R&D efforts.

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The events of September 11, 2001, made it quite clear that the United States is not immune from the threat of suicide terrorism and, indeed, is no more able than any other country to prevent it. Understanding this tactic requires examining the strategic, practical, and ideological experiences of groups for whom this mode of violence is integral to their overall operational agendas. Through an examination of four groups that have made adroit use of martyrdom—Hezbollah, Hamas, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and Al-Qaeda—the authors illuminate the motivations of groups and individuals that willingly undertake attacks, as well as their targeting, tactics, decisionmaking, and mindsets. The case studies show that the decision to conduct such strikes is not, in fact, irrational but flows from a reasoned cost-benefit analysis that needs to be understood and incorporated into risk management strategies. The authors hope that the lessons in this monograph will help U.S. decisionmakers and security analysts formulate and refine preemptive responses to such threats.

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